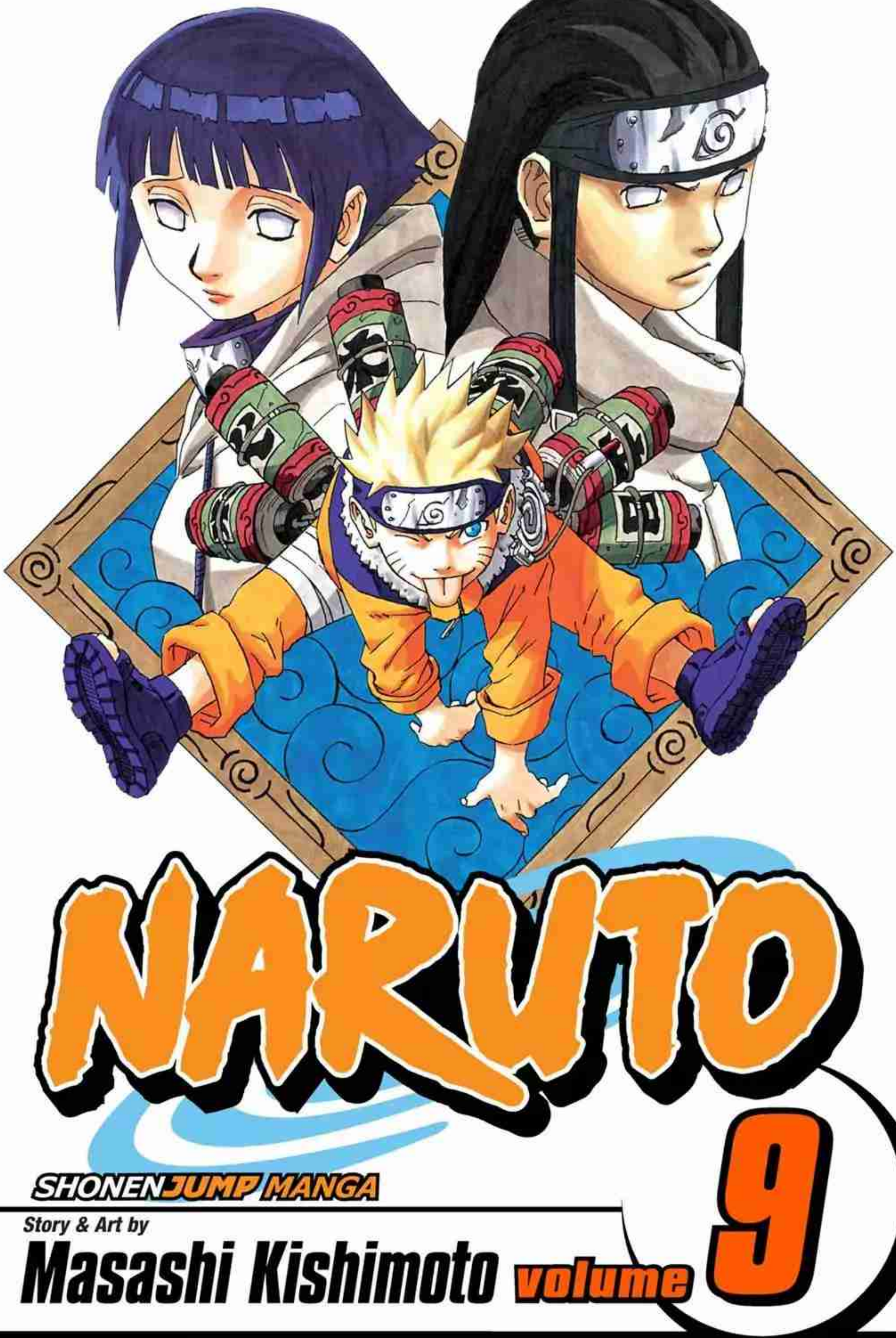

SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

volume 9

岸本斉史

One day, after I bought a book for background research, I noticed it had a special feature on the artist Claude Monet. I actually have very little interest in paintings and painters, but ever since my student days, I loved the grand old man Monet—I went to exhibits of his work and owned several books of his paintings. I envy Monet because, although in his later years he was virtually blind, he kept on painting right up until his death, and was able always to paint whatever he wanted. I would love to keep drawing whatever I want for the rest of my own life, too.

—Masashi Kishimoto, 2001

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** (Mechanism). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.

NARUTO VOL. 9
SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

This manga contains material that was originally published in English in **SHONEN JUMP** #36–38. Artwork in the magazine may have been slightly altered from that presented here.

STORY AND ART BY MASASHI KISHIMOTO

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SHONEN JUMP MANGA EDITION

VOL. 9

NEJI VS. HINATA

STORY AND ART BY

MASASHI KISHIMOTO

SAKURA サクラ

Smart and studious, Sakura is the brightest of Naruto's classmates, but she's constantly distracted by her crush on Sasuke. Her goal: to win Sasuke's heart!

NARUTO ナルト

When Naruto was born, a destructive fox spirit was imprisoned inside his body. Spurned by the older villagers, he's grown into an attention-seeking trouble-maker. His goal: to become the village's next *Hokage*.

SASUKE サスケ

The top student in Naruto's class, Sasuke comes from the prestigious Uchiha clan. His goal: to get revenge on a mysterious person who wronged him in the past.

Yamanaka Ino 山中いの

Though Ino and Sakura were once close friends, their bitter rivalry for Sasuke's affection has turned them against each other.

Hyuga Neji 日向ネジ

Neji shares many traits with Hinata, including the all-seeing Byakugan eye. But what is their relationship?

Hyuga Hinata 日向ヒナタ

This shy young kunoichi (female ninja) has a monster crush on Naruto.

Gekko Hayate 月光ハヤテ

As the proctor of the third portion of the exam, Hayate has the job of stepping in and stopping any fight where there's a clear winner…to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

THE STORY SO FAR...

Twelve years ago, a destructive nine-tailed fox spirit attacked the ninja village of Konohagakure. The *Hokage*, or village champion, defeated the fox by sealing its soul into the body of a baby boy. Now that boy, Uzumaki Naruto, has grown up to become a ninja-in-training, learning the art of *ninjutsu* with his classmates Sakura and Sasuke.

Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura (along with six other teams of student ninja) have moved on to the third portion of the Chûnin (Journeyman Ninja) Selection Exam—a series of no-holds-barred, one-on-one bouts that begin with a set of preliminary matches. As the preliminaries continue, Sakura faces off against her rival, Ino! Although strategic taunting by Sakura seems to have sent her opponent over the edge, Ino craftily distracts Sakura long enough to trap her into succumbing to the Mind Transfer Technique (Shintenshin no Jutsu), Ino's signature move! With Sakura under her control, Ino has all but won the match…or has she?!

NARUTO

VOL. 9

NEJI VS. HINATA

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Number 73: A Declaration of Defeat...?!

GO GET HER, SAKURA! GO!!

DOESN'T SHE SEE...? THIS IS HER CHANCE!!

AND... AND...

WHAT? WHAT JUST HAPPENED TO INO?

WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO SAKURA TO MAKE HER ACT SO WEIRD?!

THEN... SAKURA'S NOT EVEN...

MIND TRANS-FER ...?!

THE ENERGY FROM INO'S SHINTENSHIN MIND TRANSFER TECHNIQUE STRUCK HER HEAD-ON. SHE'S FINISHED.

!

IT'S OVER.

..!!

RIGHT NOW, INO IS INSIDE SAKURA.

EXACTLY...

SAKURA'S PSYCHE HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN AND SUPPLANTED BY THAT OF INO.

SO...

HER GOAL IS PROBABLY TO...

SEE YA, SAKURA!

IT'S OVER...

...

!

SHF

ULP!

...WISH TO WITHDRAW... FROM THE MATCH...

I... HARUNO SAKURA...

!

!

!

!

!

OH, PLEASE!

GIVE ME A BREAK.

COME ON, SAKURA!!

DON'T DO IT!!!

!

SHUT UP, YOU IDIOT. YOU CAN'T HELP HER.

IF YOU LET YOURSELF LOSE NOW TO THAT CRAZY SASUKE-CHASER...

...YOU'LL BE A DISGRACE TO ALL WOMEN!!!

YOU'VE COME SO FAR...!!

I FEEL SO COLD...

SHAKE SHAKE

SHIVER

SHIVER

WHAT...?

SHIVER

!!

BLINK

NARUTO IS SO LOUD!

ARE YOU WITH-DRAWING FROM THE MATCH?

WHAT'S WRONG?

SHIVER SHIVER SHIVER

BUT... THAT'S CRAZY...

SAKURA?!

AND HE'S RIGHT... I CAN'T LET THIS WITCH BEAT ME!

TREMBLE TREMBLE

OW...

WHO'S WHO NOW?!

WHAT THE HECK...?!

WHA--?

SAKURA...?!

!!!

ONNNG

INNER SAKURA

BUT... MY TECHNIQUE IS UNBEATABLE!

OH YEAH!!

INNER SAKURA

NO WAY DO I WITH-DRAW!

ARE YOU KIDDING? I'M STAYING IN!!

OHH!

WHAT'S UP WITH INO?!

WHAT'S GOING ON?!

NO...!!

...IF YOU DON'T HURRY UP AND GET OUT OF MY BODY, YOU'RE GONNA REGRET IT!!

GOO

INNER SAKURA

INO...

ONG

CRUNCH

VROOOM

TWITCH

FLOP

THE WAY THIS IS GOING, I'LL BE LUCKY IF I CAN EVEN HANG ON!

UGH...

KAI! RELEASE!

MAYBE INO EXPENDED TOO MUCH ENERGY BEFORE SHE TRIED THE SHINTENSHIN!... ...AND THERE-FORE LACKED SUFFICIENT CHAKRA?

INCREDIBLE!

SHE WAS ACTUALLY ABLE TO BREAK INO'S HOLD!!

HUF HUF HUF

HUF HUF HUF HUF HUF

EVEN THE SWEETEST GIRL NEEDS A HARD CENTER, OR SHE'S NOT GONNA MAKE IT OUT THERE!!

HEH... DON'T YOU KNOW?

WHAT... WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU?!

THERE WERE TWO DIFFERENT PSYCHES INSIDE YOU BEFORE I GOT THERE!

AND IT WAS NARUTO'S RAZZING THAT AWAKENED SAKURA'S DRIVE AND EGGED HER ON...

...TO CHASE INO OUT!

...BUT WHAT REALLY WON THE BATTLE WAS THE FIGHTING SPIRIT INO'S PRESENCE ROUSED IN THE HEART OF HER RIVAL!

INO'S WEAK CHAKRA WAS PART OF IT...

ONCE A VICTIM HAS BEEN POSSESSED BY THAT TECHNIQUE, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DRIVE THE INVADER OUT.

HUF

AT THIS POINT, THOUGH, I DOUBT WHETHER EITHER COMBATANT HAS MUCH CHAKRA LEFT...

IT'S REALLY NOT SO STRANGE. LIKE NARUTO, SAKURA POSSESSES A HEART THAT CANNOT BEAR TO BE BEATEN.

THIS IS IT...

TAK

TAK

THIS IS THE END!!!

KLAT

TREMBLE

OHHH...

TREMBLE

WHOA!

FLUP FLUP

...

SHHHHHHHM

WHAT?!

...NEITHER COMBATANT IN THE FOURTH BATTLE MOVES PAST THE PRELIMINARY ROUND!

NEITHER CANDIDATE IS ABLE TO CONTINUE. AS A RESULT OF SIMULTANEOUS KNOCKOUTS...

READ THIS WAY

Hop Hop

I'VE GOT YOU...

IT'S OKAY...

HEY... INO!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SAKURA?!

SHH!

THEY SHOULD BOTH REGAIN CONSCIOUS-NESS WITHIN THE NEXT HALF HOUR.

NEITHER ONE IS HURT BADLY ENOUGH TO NEED TREATMENT FROM THE MEDICAL CORPS...

I KNOW YOU'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH A LOT, BUT...

NARUTO AND SASUKE WERE BOTH DOING WELL... AND NOW EVEN FRAGILE LITTLE SAKURA...

...HAS SHOWN AMAZING GROWTH.

BUT... I'M IMPRESSED BY BOTH OF THEM.

YEAH...

?

I MEAN THAT FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!

I'M GLAD I ENROLLED YOU ALL IN THE CHÛNIN SELECTION EXAM.

...TENTEN AGAINST TEMARI. PLEASE STEP FORWARD.

THE FIFTH MATCH OF THE PRELIMINARIES ...

...

YEAH, TENTEN! GO!!

HEY, LOOK... ANOTHER CANDIDATE FROM THE LAND OF SAND! THIS SHOULD BE FUN!

BEGIN!

!

SO YOU FINALLY CAME TO, EH, SAKURA?

...

MMM... UNH...

OUR MATCH IS OVER AND DONE...

THAT'S THE SPIRIT! KEEP CHEERING HER ON!!

TENTEN, USE THE POWER OF YOUR YOUTH!

FLINCH

I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD CRY!

HMPH...

I...

... LOST ...?

READ THIS WAY

HUNH?

YOU FOUGHT ME TO A STAND-STILL!

IT'S SUCH A DISGRACE... A TIE!

!

HERE!

...!

...INTO A LOVELY FLOWER.

BY THE WAY, YOU'VE BLOSSOMED...

...INO...

...

BUT, JUST SO YOU KNOW... THE NEXT TIME WE FACE EACH OTHER, YOU DON'T GET TO TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT BY FAINTING!!

...!!

YANK

HMPH!

FLIP

FLIP

FLINCH

TWITCH

AND BY THE WAY... NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, I'M NOT GOING TO JUST HAND OVER SASUKE TO YOU!

...SAME HERE, INO! RIGHT BACK AT YOU!!

OH REALLY? WELL...

IMPOSSIBLE !!

SHE SHUT DOWN TENTEN'S WEAPONS ATTACK LIKE IT WAS NOTHING!

MURMUR

HOW DULL... IT'S A SHAME, REALLY...

THE WARRIORS FROM THE LAND OF SAND... ARE TRULY FEARSOME!

WELL, WE WEREN'T ABOUT TO LET OURSELVES BE DEFEATED IN A PLACE LIKE THIS, NOW WERE WE?

HMPH...

WHAT'S HER STORY?!

WHA...?

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 8

I PLAYED SOFTBALL FOR A WHILE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AND WHEN I ENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOL, I DECIDED TO JOIN THE BASEBALL CLUB. MY YOUNGER TWIN WAS INTO BASEBALL AS WELL, SO WE JOINED THE CLUB TOGETHER. THIS WAS WHEN THE BASEBALL ANIME *TOUCH* WAS A MONSTER SUCCESS ALL OVER JAPAN. IT WAS CREATED BY MITSURU ADACHI, AND WAS A STORY ABOUT TWIN BROTHERS WHO JOIN A BASEBALL CLUB. IN THE END, THE YOUNGER BROTHER DIES, AND THE OLDER ONE IS INSPIRED TO REALLY STEP UP AND DO A GREAT JOB FOR HIS BROTHER'S SAKE. THE IDEALISM OF THAT THEME APPEALED TO ME TREMENDOUSLY AT THE TIME.

AS AN ADOLESCENT, I GOT A LITTLE CONFUSED AND DECIDED THAT THE STORYLINE IN *TOUCH* TRULY REFLECTED MY OWN LIFE, SO I BOUGHT AND VORACIOUSLY CONSUMED THE MANGA SERIES AS WELL AS THE ANIMATION. BUT MY PASSION FOR IT COMPLETELY COOLED DOWN WHEN MY LITTLE BROTHER RUDELY TOLD ME, "OUR BASEBALL CLUB REQUIRES YOU SHAVE YOUR HEAD TO *GORINGARI* STANDARDS -- NO HAIR LONGER THAN A MILLIMETER... AND BY THE WAY, FOOL, WE BOTH SUCK AT BASEBALL." I HAD TO ADMIT HE WAS RIGHT, SO I SWITCHED MY ALLEGIANCE TO ANOTHER MANGA CALLED *MEIMON DAISAN YAKYUUBU* -- "THE GLORIOUS #3 BASEBALL CLUB" AND CONVERTED TO THE ASUNARO CAMP -- THE ADMIRERS OF THAT SERIES' MAIN CHARACTER, ASUNARO.

Number 74:

The Sixth Round Match and Then!!

...IS TEMARI!

THE WINNER OF THE FIFTH ROUND MATCH...

DOG

...

BLINK

TAK

WHOA!

TAK

HEH

!

SNATCH

PWUP

SKEESKEESKEE

READ THIS WAY

GET YOURSELF AND THAT LOSER OUT OF MY WAY.

OH, SHUT UP!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?! THAT'S NOT HOW YOU TREAT A WORTHY OPPONENT... ESPECIALLY NOT ONE YOU'VE JUST DEFEATED!!

TAP

...

NICE CATCH!

GRRR

CLENCH

!!

!

KONOHA HURRICANE!!

!!

NO, LEE--!

JUST AS I THOUGHT...

HAH!

WHAT...?!

...YOU'RE NOT SO FAST, AFTER ALL!

HOP

THAT'S ENOUGH, LEE!

MASTER GUY...!

-)HMF(-

!

WHAT THE--?!

WHAT...?!

!

YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN DECLARED THE WINNER...

HOW LONG DO YOU INTEND TO TRIFLE WITH THAT HOMELY LITTLE PRINCE CHARMING?

!

TEMARI... GET BACK UP HERE!

愛

...

-:SIGH:-

HAD ENOUGH NOW, LEE...?

...MY DEAR FRIENDS FROM SAND... IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO OFFER A WORD OF ADVICE...

PAT

QUIVER

QUIVER

!

!

...HOW STRONG THIS BOY REALLY IS.

BE PREPARED. YOU HAVE NO IDEA...

IN HIS PLACE, I'D HAVE RUN FOR COVER!

HE ACTUALLY PICKED A FIGHT WITH THOSE FREAKS FROM THE SAND...

TH-THEY REALLY CREEP ME OUT!

...!

S-SAKURA!!

!

ONNG

DON'T YOU LOSE TO THEM, NARUTO!

!!

READ THIS WAY

IF YOU LET YOURSELF LOSE NOW, YOU'LL BE A DISGRACE TO ALL MEN!

AND SASUKE WILL NEVER LET YOU LIVE IT DOWN!!

DON'T MIND ME... YOU JUST WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF!

SAKURA... ARE YOU ALREADY FEELING BETTER?!

!

...THANKS, NARUTO... FOR HELPING ME OUT BEFORE!

H€H

R-RIGHT!!

Y-YOU...!

YEAH! I SURE SAVED YOUR BUTT!

...UNTIL I HEARD YOUR OBNOXIOUS VOICE, TRUMPETING THAT RIDICULOUS BATTLE CRY.

INO ALMOST HAD ME...

HOP

WHO'S NEXT? I HAVE A FEELING IT'S ME!!

OKAY! MY TURN! I'M GOOD TO GO. WHO THINKS HE CAN TAKE ME?!

RATS!

FLUP

AW, MAN!

NARA SHIKAMARU
VS
KIN TSUCHI

HEH... IT'LL TAKE A LOT MORE THAN A STUPID TECHNIQUE LIKE THAT TO BEAT ME!

SKF

...BE WARY OF THEM.

HE MANIPU-LATES SHADOWS...

ME, EH?

IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL, I'LL PUT YOU OUT OF YOUR MISERY QUICKLY!

AND HOW EMBAR-RASSING... BEING EXPECTED TO FIGHT A GIRL...

-:SIGH:-

THIS IS SUCH A NUISANCE.

SHIKAMARU, DON'T YOU DARE LOSE!!

WELL... INO'S SUDDENLY FULL OF ENERGY!

READ THIS WAY

BEGIN!!

KOFF

...I DON'T HAVE A CLUE ABOUT WHAT THIS ONE'S SPECIALTY IS.

EVEN THOUGH I LEARNED ABOUT THE STRENGTHS OF THE SOUND NINJA WHEN WE BATTLED DURING THE SECOND EXAM...

BUT I WONDER...

ON THE OTHER HAND, SHE'S HAD A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE ME IN ACTION.

SKFF

HOW LAME!

JUST A ONE-TRICK PONY...

SSSSSSSSH

NINJA ART: KAGEMANE NO JUTSU!

WELL, THIS IS ALL I'VE GOT!

FWUP

!

ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR SHADOW'S MOVEMENTS... PIECE OF CAKE!!

HOP

SHHF

FWUNG

CHINNG

CHINNG

KLAT

KLAT

HOP

!

CHINNG

CHINNNG

...BELLS...

!

CHINNG

FW

CHATTY, AREN'T YOU?!

UP

...TO MISLEAD ME INTO THINKING I'M SAFE ONCE I'VE DODGED THE ONES I CAN HEAR...

I SUPPOSE NEXT YOU'LL BE FLINGING YOUR NEEDLES IN TWO GROUPINGS, WITH AND WITHOUT BELLS...

WHAT A TIRED OLD TRICK!

...UNTIL THE SILENT ONES PERFORATE ME... RIGHT?!

!!

CHINNG

CHING

ONCE I'VE MASTERED THE PATTERN, IF I'M CAREFUL, I CAN DO IT!

ALL I HAVE TO DO IS EVADE THE SILENT, PHANTOM NEEDLES.

FFFM

WHAT? BEHIND ME?!

AW, CRUD...!!

THREAD...?!

CHING

CHING

CHING

YANK

FWUNG

TOO LATE!!

!!

SHE'S MOCKING ME!!

SHE...SHE'S PULLING STRINGS TO RING THE BELLS...!

FWUP

SHIKAMARU!!

STAB

STAB

I...CAN'T MOVE--!!

!!

TCHGK

NOW FOR THE COUP DE GRACE!

ONCE I MASTERED HOW TO AVOID YOUR SHADOW, YOU NEVER STOOD A CHANCE!

FLIK

!

READ THIS WAY

...?!

!!

TIME TO DEPLOY MY SHADOW POSSESSION TECHNIQUE...

FLIK

SHF

OKAY...

YOU STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?

YOUR SHADOW IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT!

HOW?!

NO WAY--!

!!

SUCH DELICATE LITTLE THREADS, SO HIGH UP...

THERE'S NO WAY THEY COULD CAST SHADOWS!

YES, YOU IDIOT!

UNNG

THE THREADS DIDN'T CAST THOSE SHADOWS AT ALL!

THE SHADOW IS GROWING AND SPREAD-ING... AW, MAN!

VNNNG

...WITHIN LIMITS.

GUUUNG

!

WHEREAS I CAN MAKE MY OWN SHADOW AS BIG AS I WISH... OR AS SMALL...

ACK--!

FWP

FWP

THOSE DELICATE FILAMENTS OF DARKNESS ARE MINE, ALL MINE... TAILORED TO FIT... AND ATTACHED TO YOU!

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW!

...WILL HURT YOU, TOO!

DON'T BE AN IDIOT. WHILE WE'RE LOCKED INTO THIS MIMICRY, ANY INJURY DONE TO ME...

AW... YOU WOULDN'T--!!

SHF

POK

POK

!!

FLIK

SWUNNG

NO...! YOU FOOL!!

IT'S A HEAD-TO-HEAD SHURIKEN ATTACK. I DOUBT YOU'LL HOLD UP FOR LONG.

SWUNG

OW...

FLIP

FLIP

WHAT?!

WAS HE BLUFFING ALL ALONG?!

WHOA...

TAK

ON!!

THOK

G

FLOP

HEH HEH HEH... ONE DOWN...

YOU WERE LOCKED INTO THE SAME MOVEMENTS AS I...

SKF

A SHINOBI USES EVERYTHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE... INCLUDING THE TERRAIN... AND THE ARCHITECTURE, AS WELL.

FLIP

THERE!

READ THIS WAY

...BUT ONLY ONE OF US WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE WALL TO GIVE HERSELF A CONCUSSION!

THE WINNER IS NARA SHIKAMARU!

...SO YOU WOULDN'T NOTICE WHERE YOU WERE STANDING.

THE SHURIKEN WERE JUST A DISTRAC-TION...

HMPH... AND NOW IT'S JUST DOWN TO ME.

AND THE GUY ACTS TOTALLY HUMBLE... MAN, THAT WAS COOL!

AWESOME!!

NICE ONE, SHIKAMARU!!

THIS YEAR'S ROOKIES SEEM TO BE SHOWING SOME PROMISE, BUT...

...PLEASE, JUST DON'T LET IT BE THE SAND GUY...!

THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVEN'T COMPETED YET ARE ME, HINATA, NARUTO, ONE OF THE SOUND NINJA... CHOJI, NEJI AND LEE...AND THAT GUY FROM SAND...

NEXT UP WILL BE...

UZUMAKI NARUTO VS INUZUKA KIBA

READ THIS WAY

!

!

THANKS FOR BEING PATIENT, EVERYONE! I'M GONNA MAKE THIS WORTH YOUR WAIT!

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME!!

OH, YEAH!!

MUTTER

IF I'M NOT NEXT... THEN IT SIGNIFIES THAT SAKURA WILL HATE ME FOR HAVING MASSIVE EYEBROWS. BUT IF I AM NEXT...

FRET

WE CAN TAKE THIS GUY, AKAMARU!!!

OH, YESSS! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!!

WOOF!

Number 75:
Naruto's Coming-of-Age!!
斬あや

UZUMAKI NARUTO VERSUS INUZUKA KIBA!

THE SEVENTH ROUND BATTLE!!

C'MON... HE'LL GET IN OUR WAY!

HEY, KIBA!! SEND YOUR LITTLE PUPPY DOG HOME!!

!

DON'T BE SO COCKY, YOU JERK!

WE LUCKED OUT, AKAMARU! THIS FIGHT IS AS GOOD AS WON!!!

WOO-HOO!!

WOOF!

...ARE THE SAME AS ANY OTHER WEAPONS AND TOOLS.

THE RULES ARE CLEAR. ANIMALS AND INSECTS USED AS PART OF A NINJA'S ART...

AW, MAN... YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? IS THAT ALLOWED?

WOOF WOOF!

WHATEVER! AKAMARU FIGHTS WITH ME, LIKE ALWAYS.

...

!!

HMPH! FINE. I DO MY BEST WORK WITH A LITTLE HANDICAP, ANYWAY!

...

SIT THIS ONE OUT, AKAMARU. I'LL HANDLE HIM ALONE.

SKF

-;WHINE;-

TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME!!

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?

I-I WISH I COULD CHEER FOR NARUTO... BUT KIBA IS MY TEAMMATE, AND I DON'T WANT TO UPSET HIM! BUT...

FUSS FUSS

TOUGH BREAK, KAKASHI. THERE'S NO WAY YOUR BOY CAN BEAT KIBA!

NARUTO, HUNH?

NARUTO! DON'T YOU DARE LET THAT LOSER BEAT YOU!!!

...AT LAST. HERE GOES...

...CONSIDERING WHAT HE WAS LIKE BACK IN SCHOOL?!

ONG

TODAY WE'LL BE REVIEWING HENGE NO JUTSU -- THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION. PLEASE TAKE THE FORM OF LORD HOKAGE.

HEH... HOW MUCH SKILL AND STRENGTH COULD HE POSSIBLY HAVE GAINED SINCE HE REACHED THE RANK OF GENIN...

POOF

SNAP

BWA HA HA

HMM?

HA HA HA HA HA

...

...

BWA HA HA HA HA HA!

OHHH...

READ THIS WAY

LOUD-MOUTH... I'D JUST GOTTEN TO SLEEP!

WHO IS THIS LOSER?

POP

PRETTY FUNNY, EH? I MEANT TO DO THAT! NO, REALLY...

HEH HEH HEH!!

NOW TRY AGAIN, YOU FOOL!

NARUTO... YOU'VE BEEN A STUDENT HERE FOR THREE YEARS.

ENOUGH!!

YIPE!

AWW...

GRUMBLE

GRUMBLE

ONG

TRANS-FORM!!

HMPH...

YOU KNOW... HE HAS A GOOD GRASP OF THE BASICS. THAT WAS A DECENT IMITATION OF THE HOKAGE...

HA HA... I JUST TRANSFERRED INTO THIS CLASS. I'VE BEEN MISSING OUT!

SWF

FLASH

NARUTO...

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR...

GLARE

...

PO

OF

...

THAT'S JUST SAD!

HE'S BEEN HERE THREE YEARS WITHOUT MASTERING THE ART OF TRANS-FORMATION!

HA HA... IS THIS GUY FOR REAL?!

WELL... RIGHT BACK ATCHA!

OH, YEAH...?!

KRAK

I'LL FINISH YOU OFF FAST INSTEAD OF DRAGGING IT OUT.

DON'T WORRY. I'LL BE KIND...

CRUNCH

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYONE WITH THAT COOL ACT.

WOOF!

BEGIN!!

K.O.F.F

WELL THEN...

SHIKYAKU NO JUTSU!! DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!

SHHF

NINJA ART OF BEAST MIMICRY!

CLENCH

HOP

!

SHF

HERE I COME...

POW

HE'S FAST...!

SKF

HE'S DOWN FOR THE COUNT ALREADY, SIR!

BA

D

SKREE

COME ON, NARUTO. YOU'RE NOT THAT LAME--!

...

THERE'S NO WAY A LOSER LIKE NARUTO COULD EVER STAND UP TO KIBA!

LIKE I FIGURED...

POOR NARUTO!

HE'S SUCH A WIMP!

SEE...

...

WINK

WINK

...

...ALL THE VILLAGERS WILL HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE MY EXISTENCE AT LAST!!

...I'LL OUTSHINE EVEN THE HOKAGE! AND THEN...

...THAT'S RIGHT...

SHOOOM!!!

...THINKING THAT NARUTO WAS JUST A SWAGGER-ING FOOL, FULL OF HOT AIR...

I REMEMBER... I USED TO MOCK THOSE WORDS, TOO...

SKFoo

!!

...GET BETTER THAN ME?

WHY DON'T YOU...

...YOU BIG CHICKEN...

SHUT UP!

TAK TAK

GRUNT

...BUT...

ZOOOM

CHAAARGE!!

LUB DUB

HUFF

...YOU BIG CHICKEN?!

PUFF

YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONES I WANT TO FIGHT...

...!!

LUB DUB

THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY!

I NEVER GO BACK ON MY WORD.

!

WHAT ...?!

...I WAS WRONG!

...NARUTO!

...

YOU SHOW 'EM...

DON'T...

!!

NARUTO!!

GO!!

...UNDERESTIMATE ME!!!

WOULD YOU JUST SUR-RENDER ALREADY?!

YOU TALK PRETTY TOUGH FOR SOMEONE WHO'S BLEEDING ALL OVER THE PLACE.

WOOF!

WOOF!

SO... HE'S LIVING UP TO HIS BOASTS NOW...!

YEAH!!

OH, NARUTO!!

YOU'RE SO HIGH ON YOURSELF... YOU JUST GO AHEAD AND FIGHT ME ALONE, OR WITH YOUR DOG, OR ANY OTHER WAY YOU WANT!

!

FLINCH

...SO I COULD FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF!!

DON'T YOU GET IT? I LET YOU POUND ME...

YOU'LL BE SORRY!

...

SHF

WOOF!

HOP

GET HIM, AKAMARU!!

A SMOKE BOMB!!

!

DIG DIG

BOOOOF

AUGH--!

WOO HOO!

TROMP TROMP

YESSS!

ARGH!!

TROMP

I CAN'T SEE!!

?!

!

I GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS SMOKE... OR I'M TOAST!!

BOFF

TAK

GOTCHA!

WOOF!

!!

!!

CHOMP

OWW!!

TAK

HOP

AUGH!

POOM

...

WOOF!

WAFT

GOOD ONE, AKA--

!!

NICE!!

ALL RIGHT! I DID IT!!

WOOF!

TAK

CHOMP

?!

YOU--! THE ART OF TRANS-FORMATION?!

POOF

GOTCHA! ARF!!

FOOL

ARGH--!

!

WHERE'S AKAMARU?!

DARN IT! I LET MY GUARD DOWN!!

AKAMARU!!

-;WHINE;-

OVER HERE!

YOU... YOU TASTE LIKE DOG! YUCK!

READ THIS WAY

I HAD NO IDEA HE WAS SO GOOD...

HE TIMED HIS TRICKS FLAWLESSLY.

THAT CAN'T BE NARUTO. NO WAY COULD HE STAND UP TO KIBA... OR MAYBE EVEN BEAT HIM! I CAN'T BELIEVE...

AMAZING! NARUTO WAS ABLE TO USE THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION RIGHT ON THE HEELS OF CREATING HIS SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS! THERE'S NO WAY...!

HO HO... WHAT AN INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT.

SHIVER

EVER SINCE THIS EXAM BEGAN, HE'S REALLY SEEMED TO BE COMING INTO HIS OWN...

BUT WHAT A FREAK... ACTUALLY BITING KIBA... AND THEN HAVING IT BACKFIRE ON HIM. HE'S HILARIOUS...

HUF

THEN... RIGHT BACK ATCHA!

OH YEAH?

SO THIS TIME, I'M NOT HOLDING BACK!!

I GUESS YOU'VE GOTTEN STRONGER, EH...?

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 9

FOR ME, JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WAS ALL ABOUT BASEBALL, AND DURING EVERY SUMMER VACATION WE HAD TRAINING CAMP. AT OUR SCHOOL, THE ENTIRE BASEBALL CLUB WENT TO SHODO ISLAND, FAMOUS FOR ITS OLIVES AND ITS MONKEYS. EVEN WHILE ON THE TRIP, EVERYONE WAS REQUIRED TO WEAR OUR BLACK SCHOOL UNIFORM PANTS WITH WHITE SHIRTS. THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE BASEBALL CLUB USUALLY TOTALED ABOUT 45, AND WE WOULD RENT A BUS AND SET OUT FOR CAMP WITH GREAT POMP AND SPLENDOR.
WE HAD GOOD TIMES -- AND MORE THAN A LITTLE PAIN -- DURING OUR STAYS ON SHODO ISLAND, AND IT WAS OUR TRADITION TO END THE EXPERIENCE EACH SUMMER BY CLIMBING THE LOCAL TOURIST RESORT'S "MONKEY MOUNTAIN" RIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT.
...IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, IT WAS WHEN I WAS IN THE EIGHTH GRADE THAT I WAS INVOLVED IN AN INCIDENT SO TERRIBLE THAT ITS INFAMY IS UNPARALLELED IN THE ANNALS OF THE TRAINING CAMP HISTORY -- A DISASTROUS EVENT THAT COULD HAVE GOTTEN A LOT OF PEOPLE KILLED. WHENEVER I RECALL WHAT I DID AND WHAT HAPPENED I WISH I COULD FORGET... BUT I'M RUNNING OUT OF IDEAS FOR THIS FEATURE NOW, SO I'M GOING TO FINALLY TELL THE TALE...

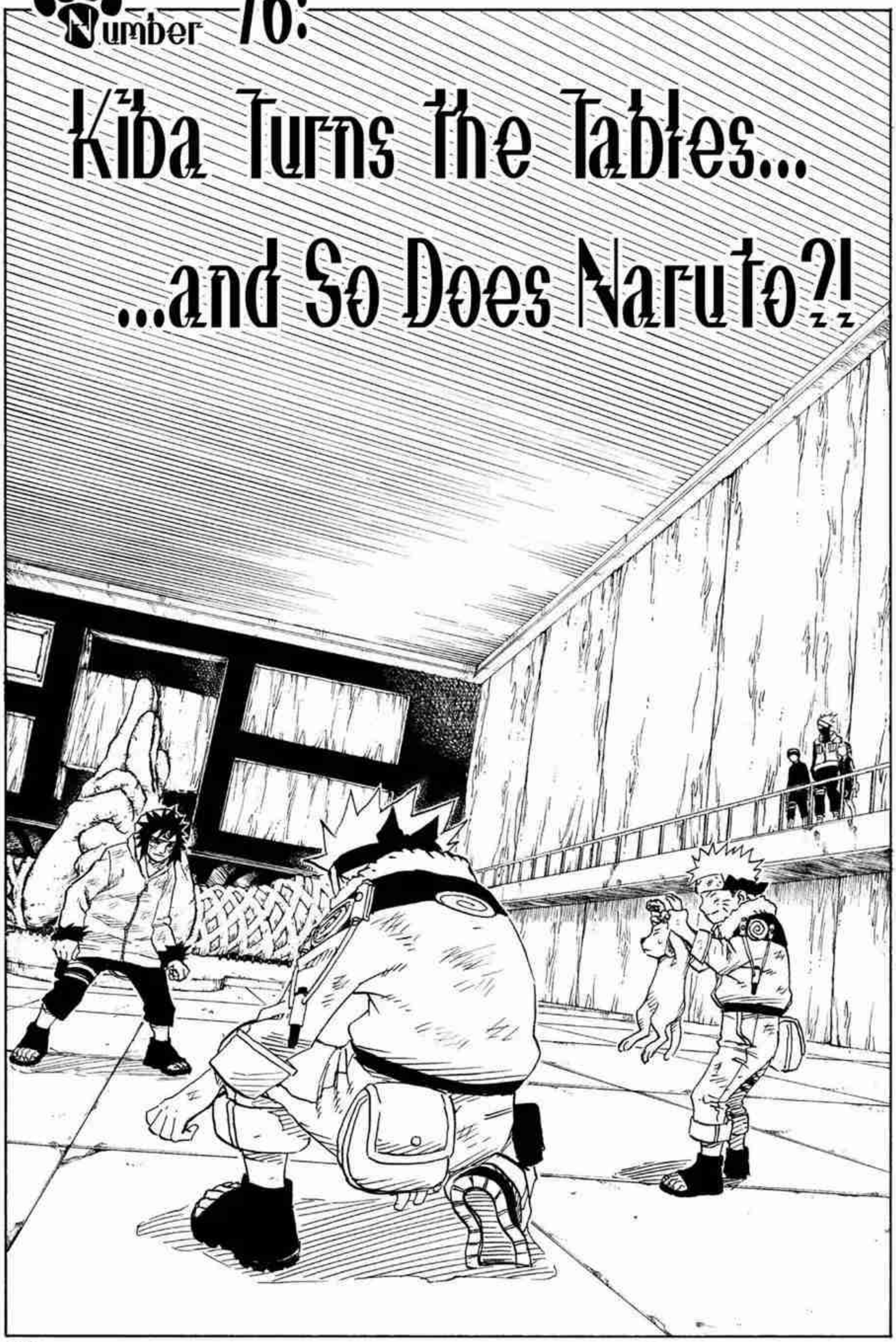
...NEXT TIME.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Number 76:

Kiba Turns the Tables...

...and So Does Naruto?!!



OH, N-NARUTO...

TH--!

THAT WAS AWESOME, NARUTO!!

BUT... I THOUGHT THAT THIS NARUTO KID WAS A TOTAL DUNCE!!

...WHAT KIND OF METHOD DID KAKASHI USE TO TEACH HIM...?

YEAH!

I THINK WE'RE LOOKING AT A WHOLE NEW NARUTO!

READ THIS WAY

...I THINK MY BOY KIBA AND AKAMARU MAY HAVE MATURED EVEN MORE THAN NARUTO HAS!

HOWEVER...

YA WWW

I MEAN IT, NARUTO. NO HOLDS BARRED... NO MERCY!

FLIK

GULP

?!

CHUMP

SNARL!

OWW!

BRISTLE

GRRR...

GRRR!

BRISTLE

!

SKRRT

OW

G

A MILITARY RATIONS PELLET?!

WH-WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU FEEDING THAT DOG?!

HIS FUR... IT TURNED RED!

SK

TAK

LET'S DO IT, AKAMARU!!

GULP

HIS NAME IS AKAMARU. IT MEANS "RED," YOU DOPE!!

...IS PLANNING TO END THIS, HERE AND NOW.

KIBA...

READ THIS WAY

!!

NINJA ART OF BEAST MIMICRY!

WOOF WOOF!!

(NINJA ART OF HUMAN MIMICRY!)

SHHHMM

JUJIN BUNSHIN! MAN-BEAST DOPPELGANGERS!

HEY! ISN'T THIS CONSIDERED "DOPING"? IS THIS ALLOWED?!

THE LOOK IN HIS EYES IS FREAKING ME OUT! HE MUST BE HOPPED UP ON SOMETHING!

GRRR!

THEY'RE HIGH IN PROTEIN AND ARE EASILY ABSORBED, AND THEY HAVE A RELAXING EFFECT... EVEN AS THEY BOOST ENERGY.

HYOROGAN -- MILITARY RATIONS PELLETS -- ARE A CLASS OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS. PEOPLE SAY THAT TAKING A SINGLE PILL ALLOWS A SOLDIER TO FIGHT FOR THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS WITHOUT REST!

BY NOW, BOTH KIBA'S AND AKAMARU'S CHAKRAS ARE PROBABLY DOUBLE THEIR NORMAL LEVEL...

YOU'RE ALWAYS SAYING THAT!!

IT IS PERMITTED. THE MILITARY RATION PELLETS ARE ACCEPTABLE NINJA TOOLS!

THEY'RE CALLED HYOROGAN.

WHICH MEANS...?

WHAT? WHAT DID THEY JUST EAT?!

FOR KIBA, IT'S IDEAL.

IN BATTLE SITUATIONS, THE PELLETS ACT AS A MEDICINE THAT DISTRIBUTES THE USER'S CHAKRA UNIFORMLY TO EVERY PART OF HIS BODY, MAKING IT FUNCTION AS AN ANIMAL'S DOES...

THIS IS BAD NEWS FOR NARUTO...

!

SHIKYAKU NO JUTSU!

DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!

TAK

THK

HOP

POUNCE

THOP THOK THK THOP

HEYYY--!

HOP

SWIPE

SWIPE

AW, MAN--!

EVEN IF I DRIVE ALL OF MY CHAKRA DOWN INTO MY LEGS, IT STILL TAKES EVERYTHING I'VE GOT JUST TO EVADE HIM...! AT THIS RATE...

SKID

UGH!

!!

THERE'S MY CHANCE--!!

!

LUNGE

TAKE THIS! MAN-BEAST ULTIMATE TAIJUTSU!

TWI KR KR L

TAK TAK TAK

POW

AAGH--!!!

GATSUUGA! FANG OVER FANG!!

POW POW POW

!

SHIVER

-;GAGK;-

SKFF

THIS PERFECTLY ILLUSTRATES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR LEVELS OF STRENGTH...

FLOP

...

NO ONE'S DELUDED ENOUGH TO THINK YOU REALLY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME THE NEXT HOKAGE... NOT EVEN YOU!

YOU CAN'T EVEN BEAT ME!

YOU, HOKAGE?

TELL YOU WHAT, THOUGH... I'LL BECOME HOKAGE IN YOUR PLACE!

...I WON'T... LOSE... NOW...

...BE THE HOKAGE.

I-I'M GONNA...

SCRAPE

OH, KIBA... YOU'RE WRONG...

NARUTO... IS NO WEAKLING...

JUST YOU WAIT!

I'LL BECOME THE HOKAGE SOMEDAY. I WILL! IT'S TRUE!!

HIS COURAGE IS AMAZING... I KNOW ALL TOO WELL HOW HARD IT CAN BE TO STAND UP FOR YOURSELF.

AND I WISH I HAD EVEN HALF THE CONFIDENCE HE'S ALWAYS SHOWN IN HIMSELF.

THEY REFUSED TO SEE HIM AS HE REALLY WAS... BUT...

HUF HUF HUF HUF

...AND YET, FOR THE LONGEST TIME, NO ONE WOULD EVEN ADMIT HE HAD ANY GOOD POINTS AT ALL.

SHHHF...

NARUTO!! GET UP!

EVERYONE IS ACKNOWLEDGING HIM... I HIS DETERMINATION...

NOW, EVERYONE IS WATCHING...

READ THIS WAY

!

...YOU'LL WHIMPER...

...LIKE A WHIPPED DOG!!!

IF YOU TRY TO COME BETWEEN ME... AND THE TITLE OF HOKAGE...

LET'S GO, AKAMARU!!

TAK

TAK

...YOU'RE A STUBBORN ONE, AREN'T YOU?

GEEZ...

SHF

HEY! YOU CAN'T FOOL ME AGAIN WITH THE SAME OLD TRICK!

TAKE THAT!!

TAK TAK

!!

UNGH...

TAK

BOK!

WE'RE NOT DONE YET!!

SKIDD

SO, NOW WHAT?!

...IT'S STILL A TOUGH ONE TO HAVE TO KEEP DODGING!

EVEN THOUGH I'VE SEEN THIS TECHNIQUE BEFORE...

IF I CAN JUST GET ONE OF THEM... IT'S GOT TO BE KIBA, OR WHAT'S THE POINT?!

BUT WHO'S WHO?!

FWUP

FWOOM FWOOM

I'VE GOT IT!

!!

SMAT

WHAT'S NARUTO UP TO?!

I'VE GOT YOU NOW...!!

!!

POO

!!

ONN

TRANSFORM!!

GO

OH!

...

AHA... VERY GOOD!

WATCH CLOSELY ...

HUNH?!

NARUTO AS KIBA

KIBA

AKAMARU AS KIBA

NARUTO CAN ATTACK

NARUTO CAN ATTACK

NARUTO IS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS FOR SURE THAT BOTH OF THE OTHERS ARE HIS ENEMIES, SO HE CAN ATTACK EITHER ONE WITH IMPUNITY!!

AKAMARU AS KIBA

THE REAL KIBA

NARUTO AS KIBA

CAN'T ATTACK

AKAMARU CAN ATTACK

LIKEWISE, AKAMARU DOESN'T KNOW WHICH "KIBA" IS HIS MASTER AND WHICH ONE IS NARUTO, SO AKAMARU CAN'T ATTACK.

THE REAL KIBA

AKAMARU AS KIBA

NARUTO AS KIBA

KIBA CAN'T ATTACK

KIBA CAN ATTACK

IF NARUTO TRANSFORMS INTO KIBA, THEN THE REAL KIBA WON'T KNOW WHICH FAKE KIBA IS AKAMARU AND WHICH ONE IS NARUTO... IF HE ATTACKS EITHER ONE, HE RISKS TAKING OUT HIS PARTNER.

NARUTO REALLY THOUGHT THIS ONE OUT!

A WORD OF WARNING...

I SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO, BUT...

NICE!

HE'S GIVEN HIMSELF AN OPENING...

!

AND HERE'S THE REASON WHY...

YOUR ART OF TRANSFORMATION TRICK NO LONGER WORKS ON ME...

I WAS CARELESS BEFORE, BUT NOW I'M ON TO YOU.

POW!

AGH--!!

HYAH!!

I CAN SMELL YOU!

SKIDDD

UNH!

NEVER UNDER-ESTIMATE A CANINE'S OLFACTORY ACUITY!

READ THIS WAY

I WIN.

->MOAN<-

...SO THAT HE CAN DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS BY SCENT ALONE!

BY GATHERING HIS CHAKRA TO HIS NOSE, KIBA CAN MULTIPLY HIS SENSE OF SMELL TO TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TIMES THE NORMAL STRENGTH...

!!

!

WH-WHAT THE--?!

POO

F

AKAMARU!!

Number 77: Naruto's Clever Scheme!!

!
!
!

NO!!

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?!

!

WITH KIBA'S NOSE... HOW COULD HE MISTAKE NARUTO FOR AKAMARU?!

HOW COULD IT BE?!

THEN YOU MUST BE NARUTO... MOCKING ME!!!

UNH!

Number 77: Naruto's Clever Scheme!! zz

A PRANK WORTHY OF MY LITTLE PRACTICAL JOKER!

HE WAS TOTALLY TRICKED!!

?!?

!!

WHAT?!

POW

!!

SHAKE

WHAT--?!?

TAKE THIS!!

NOW'S MY CHANCE! TRANS-FORM!!

HE HIT ME-!

POW

NARUTO AS KIBA

KIBA

AKAMARU AS KIBA

I GET IT! AFTER KIBA'S NOSE EXPOSED NARUTO'S DECEIT, NARUTO WAITED UNTIL KIBA PUNCHED HIM... AND THEN TRANSFORMED HIMSELF INTO AKAMARU!!

!!

IMMEDIATELY TRANSFORMED INTO AKAMARU

BAM

NARUTO AS AKAMARU

HUNH? I HIT AKAMARU?!

KIBA

!?

AKAMARU AS KIBA

BY TIMING IT PRECISELY, NARUTO TRICKED KIBA INTO THINKING THAT THE MAN-BEAST TRANSFORMATION HAD COME UNDONE, AND THAT HE'D TAKEN OUT AKAMARU INSTEAD!

UNH...

SHF

...

WHEN DID NARUTO GET SO SMART?!

FLOP

!

...YOU SHOULD REALLY THINK ABOUT THEIR CONSEQUENCES... OTHERWISE THEY'LL JUST BE USED AGAINST YOU, FOOL!

BEFORE YOU START THROWING THOSE TECHNIQUES AROUND...

GRRR

...!

...VERY FUNNY...

...YOU LITTLE JERK...!

HEH...

HMPH...

...I CAN'T LET HIM SET THE PACE. GOT TO CENTER MYSELF... REMAIN CALM.

THIS VERBAL WRANGLING IS TOTALLY POINTLESS!!

CHOMP

DRIP

POP

I'LL WATCH HIS MOVEMENTS AND STRIKE WHEN THERE'S AN OPENING...

I CAN GET HIM WITH THE DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!

POP

SO I STILL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE!

1

THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN KEEP UP WITH MY MOVES.

RUSTLE

KLAT

TAK

FINALLY TAKING ME SERIOUSLY, EH, KIBA?

THE ENEMY HAS COOLED OFF...

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE, NARUTO?

IF I STAY RELAXED, THIS IS DEFINITELY A MATCH I CAN WIN!!

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!

...THAT SHOULD END THIS FAST!!

SKF

WELL, THERE'S A NEW KILLER MOVE I'VE BEEN PRACTICING...

EVEN NOW, HE STILL HAS A NEW TRICK UP HIS SLEEVE? WHOA... HE'S AMAZING!

?

WHEN COULD HE HAVE MASTERED THAT?!?

...HUNH?

A NEW KILLER MOVE?!

WHAT?!

FLASH

!

--ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP YOU FROM RELEASING IT!!!

I DON'T RECOGNIZE THE TECHNIQUE, BUT--!!

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

SNAP

SHIKYAKU NO JUTSU! DOWN ON ALL FOURS TECHNIQUE!!!

NOW... NINJA ART OF BEAST MIMICRY!!

TAK

ZZHNG

AAARRH!!

FWUP

HEY--!

FWUP

FWUP

!

HOP

TOO LATE!

!!

TAKE THIS--!!

OH!

POOT

AARGH!!

!!

IN HIS PRESENT STATE, KIBA'S SENSE OF SMELL IS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TIMES SHARPER THAN USUAL...!

FAST MOVEMENTS AND A SHARP NOSE... KIBA'S BEAST MIMICRY SKILL HAS BECOME HIS UNDOING!

!!

!!

!!

GAAAH...

SHUDDER

SHUDDER

...TRUST THE ULTIMATE MAVERICK NINJA TO TURN BREAKING WIND INTO AN ATTACK MOVE!

OKAY... THAT FART WAS PROBABLY UNINTENTIONAL, `BUT...

BUT NOW... IT'S TIME FOR ME TO START SHOWING YOU MY NEW MOVE!!!

RATS! I WAS OVER-DOING IT A LITTLE...

SHUDDER

!

NARUTO! NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!

ALL RIGHT!

ON-ING

KAGE BUNSHIN NO JUTSU! ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGER!!

!

IT'S TIME TO REPAY ALL THE ABUSE I'VE TAKEN UP 'TIL NOW!!!

!!!

WHOP

HOP

U!!

RUN

MA!

KI!

ZU!

NARUTO
BARRAGE!!

HE REALLY STUDIED SASUKE'S EARLIER MOVE... THAT RASCAL.

A NEW TECH-NIQUE...

EVEN THE NAME IS ALMOST IDENTICAL

SKF

ONNG HUF HUF

ONG HUF HUF

HUF HUF HUF

K'OFF

YEAH!!

AND THE WINNER IS UZUMAKI NARUTO!

...YES!

INCREDIBLE! NARUTO BEAT KIBA!

OH, YEAH! THAT FEELS GOOD!!

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

I'VE GOTTEN STRONGER ...!

...I... I HAVE!

CLENCH

FLINCH

WOO HOO! EASY AS PIE!

STRUT

STRUT

FLUTTER FLUTTER

...SH... SHOULD I...? SHOULDN'T I...?

FLUTTER

...HINATA...!

?

SHFF

...N...NARUTO...

!

FOR ME...? WHY...?

...AN OINTMENT... FOR WOUNDS.

...WHAT'S THAT STUFF?

UH... OKAY!

THANKS. YOU'RE A GOOD GUY, HINATA!

...

JUST TAKE IT FROM HER, NARUTO!

DON'T FEEL ASHAMED, KIBA. IT TURNS OUT YOU FOUGHT A WORTHY OPPONENT AFTER ALL!

...LADY HINATA?

WELL, AREN'T YOU LOOKING CARE-FREE...

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART 10

...THE INFAMOUS INCIDENT... IT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER THE END OF TRAINING CAMP, THE DAY THAT ALL 45 OF US IN THE BASEBALL CLUB CLIMBED THE RESORT'S MONKEY MOUNTAIN TOGETHER.

TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING, AS WE STARTED TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN, WE SAW A PLACARD THAT SAID, "DO NOT LOOK THE WILD MONKEYS IN THE EYE. IT IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS." THE SIGN ALONE WAS ENOUGH TO GIVE US THE JITTERS, BUT AS WE CONTINUED UP THE 200-METER MOUNTAIN PATH WITH THE GLARING EYES OF VAST NUMBERS OF WILD MONKEYS UPON US, WE GOADED EACH OTHER FURTHER, SAYING STUFF LIKE, "WHOA! GETTING CLOSE TO MONKEYS IS SCARY! THEY'LL GET MAD IF YOU SO MUCH AS SPIT OUT YOUR GUM! AND THEY'VE GOT THESE HUGE FANGS, MAN. THEY ARE BAD NEWS!" AND SO ON AND SO FORTH... WE WERE GETTING THOROUGHLY FREAKED OUT. WHEN WE REACHED THE SUMMIT, THERE WERE ABOUT 100 TAME MONKEYS BEING MANAGED BY AN ANIMAL TRAINER, AND THEY CAME OVER TO GREET US. UNLIKE THEIR WILD COUNTERPARTS THAT WE'D BEEN WARNED AGAINST, THESE TAME ONES WERE GENTLE, PEOPLE-FRIENDLY, SWEET MONKEYS, ACCORDING TO THEIR HANDLER. HE TOLD US THAT THERE WAS ONE ALPHA MALE AMONG THE SUMMIT MONKEYS, AND THEY SEEMED TO BE CREATING AN INDEPENDENT COLONY. AND THEN HE POINTED THE BOSS MONKEY OUT TO US. NOT SURPRISINGLY, IT WAS HUGE... WE COULDN'T HELP NOTICING THE MANY SCARS THAT CRISS-CROSSED ITS BODY, EACH UNDOUBTEDLY REPRESENTING A VICTORY IN ONE OF THE HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT BATTLES IT HAD ENDURED ON ITS ROAD TO BECOME THE HEAD OF THE COLONY. WHILE I LOOKED UP AT THE ALPHA MONKEY, WHICH WAS SITTING FIRMLY ATOP A PROMINENT BOULDER, I NERVOUSLY EDGED TOWARD IT, WANTING TO GET A CLOSER LOOK.

AND THAT WAS IT!
THE MOMENT WHEN IT HAPPENED!!

(TO BE CONTINUED...)

Number 78: Neji vs. Hinata

SSSSSS

SMEAR

?

WANNA TRY SOME, SAKURA?!

HERE!

THE NINE-TAILED FOX WITHIN GIVES YOU AMAZING RECUPERATIVE POWER!

...NO ONE ELSE'S WOUNDS WILL HEAL AS QUICKLY AS YOURS, NARUTO.

GREAT MEDICINE!

THIS STUFF REALLY WORKS!

...FOR KIBA... AND AKAMARU...

TH-THIS IS A HEALING SALVE...

UH... UM...

NICE OF YOU TO WORRY ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE... BUT SAVE SOME OF THAT CONCERN FOR YOUR-SELF!

READ THIS WAY

...IF THEY PAIR YOU OFF AGAINST THAT SAND NINJA... WITHDRAW IMMEDIATELY!

THERE ARE ONLY SIX OF YOU LEFT... YOU, CHOJI, NEJI, LEE, ONE OF THE SOUND NINJA... AND THAT GUY FROM SAND.

...?

LISTEN, HINATA...

HE'S SO CRUEL TO YOU...

YOU'D BE TORN TO PIECES...

THE SAME THING GOES FOR NEJI. IF YOU HAVE TO FACE HIM, DON'T FIGHT. FORFEIT.

...

AND NOT JUST HIM!

WELL THEN... THE NEXT MATCH WILL BE...

KOFF

HYUGA HINATA
VS
HYUGA NEJI

...

THESE CONTESTS GET MORE AND MORE INTRIGUING...

HINATA...

UGH...

...NEJI... BIG BROTHER...

...

I NEVER DREAMED WE'D FIND OURSELVES FIGHTING EACH OTHER...

...LADY HINATA.

BUT THEY'RE NOT BROTHER AND SISTER...

...BOTH ARE MEMBERS OF KONOHA'S OLDEST AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY, THROUGH WHOSE VEINS FLOWS THE MOST ELITE AND ACCOMPLISHED BLOOD... THE HYUGA CLAN.

SHE'S HIS SISTER?!

HUNH?!

THEN... HOW ARE THEY RELATED?

BRANCH AND TRUNK...?

...THAT A TREE BRANCH IS RELATED TO THE TRUNK.

WELL... IT'S COMPLICATED... I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THEY'RE RELATED IN THE SAME WAY...

MAIN BRANCH

CADET BRANCH

YES! HINATA IS A MEMBER OF THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE HYUGA CLAN...

AND NEJI IS A MEMBER OF THE CADET BRANCH THAT SUPPORTS IT.

THERE'S BEEN STRAIN BETWEEN THE CENTRAL AND CADET BRANCHES OF CLAN HYUGA FOR SOME TIME...

RELATIONS AREN'T EXACTLY FRIENDLY.

YES... EXCEPT...

...SO IT'S FAMILY FIGHTING FAMILY?

THAT'LL BE HARD ON BOTH OF THEM.

WHAT...?

...I DON'T KNOW ALL THE DETAILS, BUT...

WHY'S THAT?

HMM...

IT'S SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE CADET BRANCH STILL BURN WITH ANGER AND HUMILIATION.

...IT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY COMMON TALE AMONG OLDER FAMILIES. THE FIRST GENERATION OF THE HYUGA CLAN...

...IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE FAMILY LINE AND RETAIN THE PURITY OF THEIR BLOOD.

...MADE ALL SORTS OF RULES AND DECREES THAT FAVORED THE MAIN BRANCH OF THE FAMILY...

WELL... PLEASE BEGIN THE MATCH!

KOFF

...

SO IT'S ONE OF THOSE FATEFUL SHOWDOWN THINGS, THEN...

...?

THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO POINT OUT TO LADY HINATA.

BEFORE WE BEGIN...

CLENCH

WITHDRAW FROM THE MATCH!

YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT TO BE A SHINOBI.

...

...A PEACEMAKER, NOT A TROUBLE-MAKER.

YOU'RE ALL SWEETNESS AND LIGHT...

YOU'RE EASILY LED, NOT A LEADER.

...!

READ THIS WAY

THE TRUTH IS, YOUR PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN RELUCTANT FROM THE START...

...AND YOU COULDN'T BEAR TO LET YOUR TEAMMATES DOWN.

...HASN'T IT?

BUT APPLICANTS FOR THE HIGHER-LEVEL CHÛNIN SELECTION EXAM MUST COMPETE AS A TRIO...

YOU'VE GOT A WORLD-CLASS INFERIORITY COMPLEX...

AND YOU HAVE NO SELF-CONFIDENCE.

...SO I KNOW YOU'D HAVE BEEN MORE COMFORTABLE AND CONTENT STAYING AT THE GENIN LEVEL.

...WANTED TO CHANGE THAT ABOUT MYSELF.

SO, OF MY OWN VOLITION, I...

I...

...N... NO...

YOU'RE WRONG.

...I REALLY ...

HINATA IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE HEIR APPARENT OF THE HYUGA MAIN BRANCH...

FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, HINATA WILL BE UNDER MY COMMAND...

...IF THAT TRULY MEETS WITH YOUR APPROVAL.

...HINATA...

STAND UP, HANABI!

SKF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

...SHE'S A FAILURE WHO CANNOT EVEN MEASURE UP TO HANABI, FIVE YEARS HER JUNIOR.

WE REGARD HER AS SUPERFLUOUS TO THE CLAN...

DO AS YOU PLEASE...

IN HER WORK AS A GENIN, SHE WILL BE CONSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY AND IN DANGER OF DEATH.

...AS YOU WISH.

IF YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO DISCUSS, PLEASE GO. YOU'RE IN THE WAY!

READ THIS WAY

...IN HER OWN WAY, HINATA IS TRYING TO IMPROVE HERSELF...!

A LEOPARD DOESN'T CHANGE ITS SPOTS.

WHAT?

LADY HINATA... YOU'RE THE SHELTERED LITTLE BABY OF THE MAIN BRANCH, AREN'T YOU?

THAT JERK...!

AND A WEAK PERSONALITY WON'T BECOME STRONG.

A FAILURE ALWAYS FAILS.

IT'S WHY WE'VE COINED TERMS LIKE "ELITE" AND "FAILURE."

IT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE UNCHANGING NATURE OF HUMANKIND THAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE ARE BORN...

YES, IT'S A FORM OF DISCRIMINATION. AND THE FACTORS THAT IT'S BASED ON DON'T CHANGE. WE HAVE NO CHOICE...

...WE MUST LIVE WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES SET FOR US BY THE JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU ARE. WE'RE ALL JUDGED ON THE BASIS OF OUR LOOKS, OUR INTELLIGENCE, OUR TALENT, OR OUR PERSONALITIES...

...JUST AS WE JUDGE OTHERS IN THEIR TURN.

GRR

GRR TREMBLE

...AS THE FACT THAT I'M OF THE CADET BRANCH OF THE FAMILY... AND YOU'RE A MEMBER OF THE MAIN BRANCH.

IT'S AS UNCHANGE-ABLE...

...THIS COURAGE YOU'RE DISPLAYING IS JUST A BLUFF!

IN THE TRUEST, DEEPEST PART OF YOUR HEART, YOU'RE DESPERATE TO RUN AWAY FROM HERE RIGHT NOW.

AND SO I KNOW...

I'VE SEEN THROUGH MANY THINGS WITH THIS ALL-SEEING BYAKUGAN EYE...

THE "BYAKUGAN" THAT HE MENTIONED IS ONE OF THE KEKKEI GENKAI* PASSED DOWN IN THE HYUGA FAMILY...

...AN OCULAR ART IN SOME WAYS SIMILAR TO THE SHARINGAN...

THEY SAY THAT OUR SASUKE'S OWN UCHIHA CLAN CAN TRACE ITS ORIGINS BACK TO THE HYUGA CLAN.

THE BYAKUGAN ...?!

N...NO... I REALLY WANT TO...

*GENETICALLY INHERITABLE TRAITS

...THE BYAKUGAN SURPASSES THE SHARINGAN COMPLETELY.

...BUT IN ITS PENETRATING PERCEPTIVE ABILITY...

GRR RR

BLINK

READ THIS WAY

...YOU AVERTED YOUR OWN EYES...

JUST NOW, TO ESCAPE MY STARE...

...!

FLING!

MY EYES CAN'T BE DECEIVED.

...ONE THAT BROUGHT YOU PAIN.

...GLANCING TOWARDS THE UPPER LEFT. IT SIGNALED YOUR RECALL OF A PAST EXPERIENCE...

...YOU IMAGINED THE OUTCOME OF THIS MATCH.

IN OTHER WORDS... YOU RECALLED YOUR OWN PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES, AND BASED UPON THOSE MEMORIES...

...IT INDICATED THAT YOU WERE ENVISIONING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL AGONY.

WHEN YOU SUBSEQUENTLY GLANCED TO THE LOWER RIGHT...

...YOUR OWN DEFEAT!!

YOU FORESAW...

HUF

...BECAUSE EVERYTHING I HAVE SAID SO FAR HAS BEEN RIGHT ON TARGET!

HUF

YOU IMPLORE ME TO COME NO FURTHER, TO PEER NO MORE DEEPLY INTO THE INNERMOST SECRETS OF YOUR HEART...

FLINCH

EVEN NOW, AS YOU BRING YOUR ARMS UP IN FRONT OF YOUR BODY AS IF TO SHIELD YOURSELF...

...YOUR BODY IS SIGNALING YOUR DESIRE TO RAISE A WALL BETWEEN US... TO CREATE SOME DISTANCE FROM ME.

IT'S A DEFENSIVE REFLEX... AN ATTEMPT TO EASE YOUR OWN ANXIETIES AND DOUBTS...

THE WAY YOU'RE TOUCHING YOUR LIP...IT'S ANOTHER OF THOSE TENDER, INTIMATE BEHAVIORS THAT EXPRESSES THE AGITATION IN YOUR HEART...

HUF

HUF

HUF

IN ADDITION ...

GRRR

GRRR

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

IT'S COMPLETELY CLEAR... WHETHER YOU ADMIT IT OR NOT, THAT YOU ARE AWARE...

READ THIS WAY

!

YES, SHE CAN !!!!

...THAT YOU CAN NEVER CHANGE YOUR-SELF!

SHOW HIM, HINATA! BEAT UP THIS IDIOT!

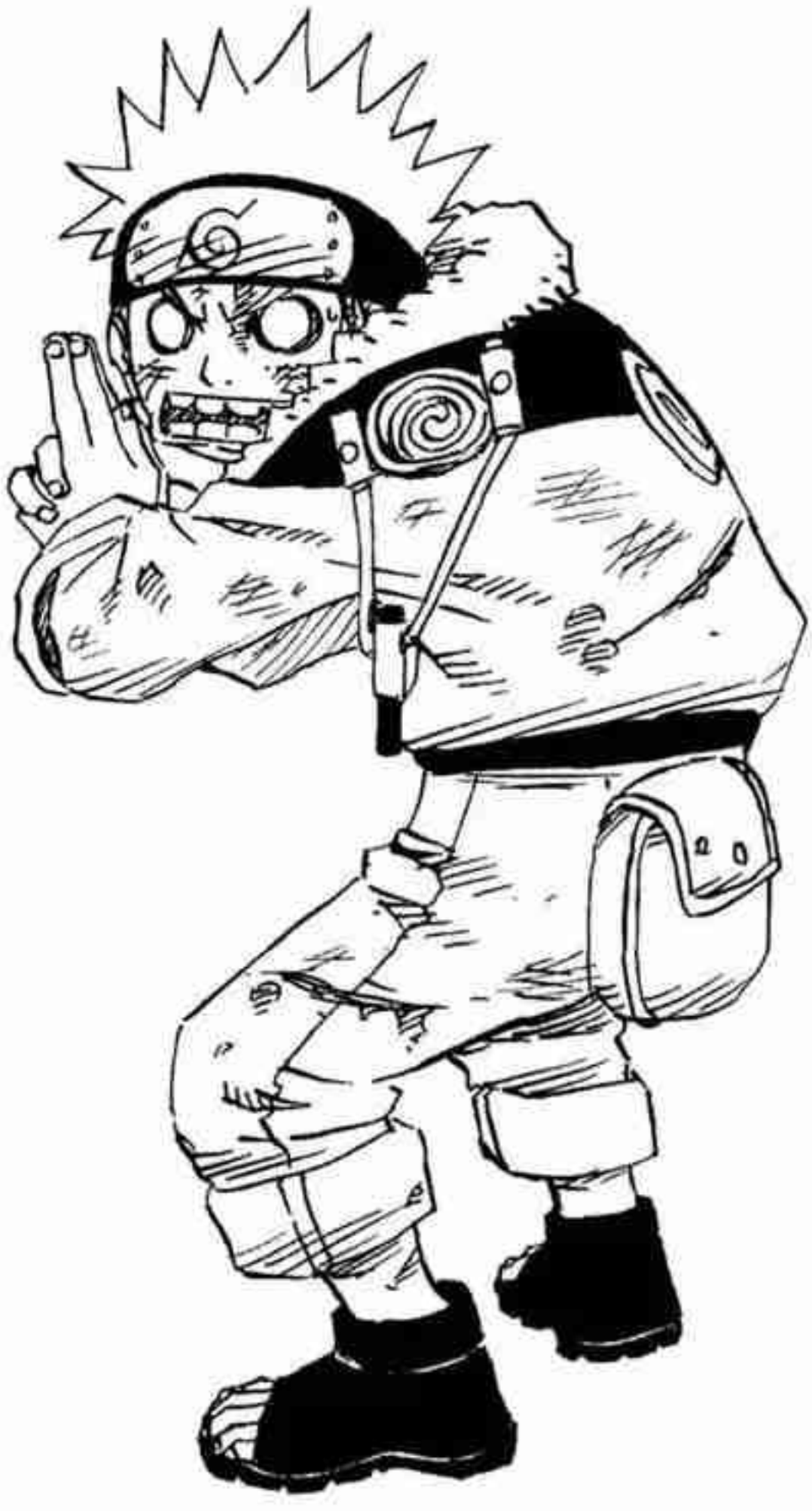
YOU CAN'T JUST ARBITRARILY DECIDE THESE THINGS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE, YOU FOOL!

...

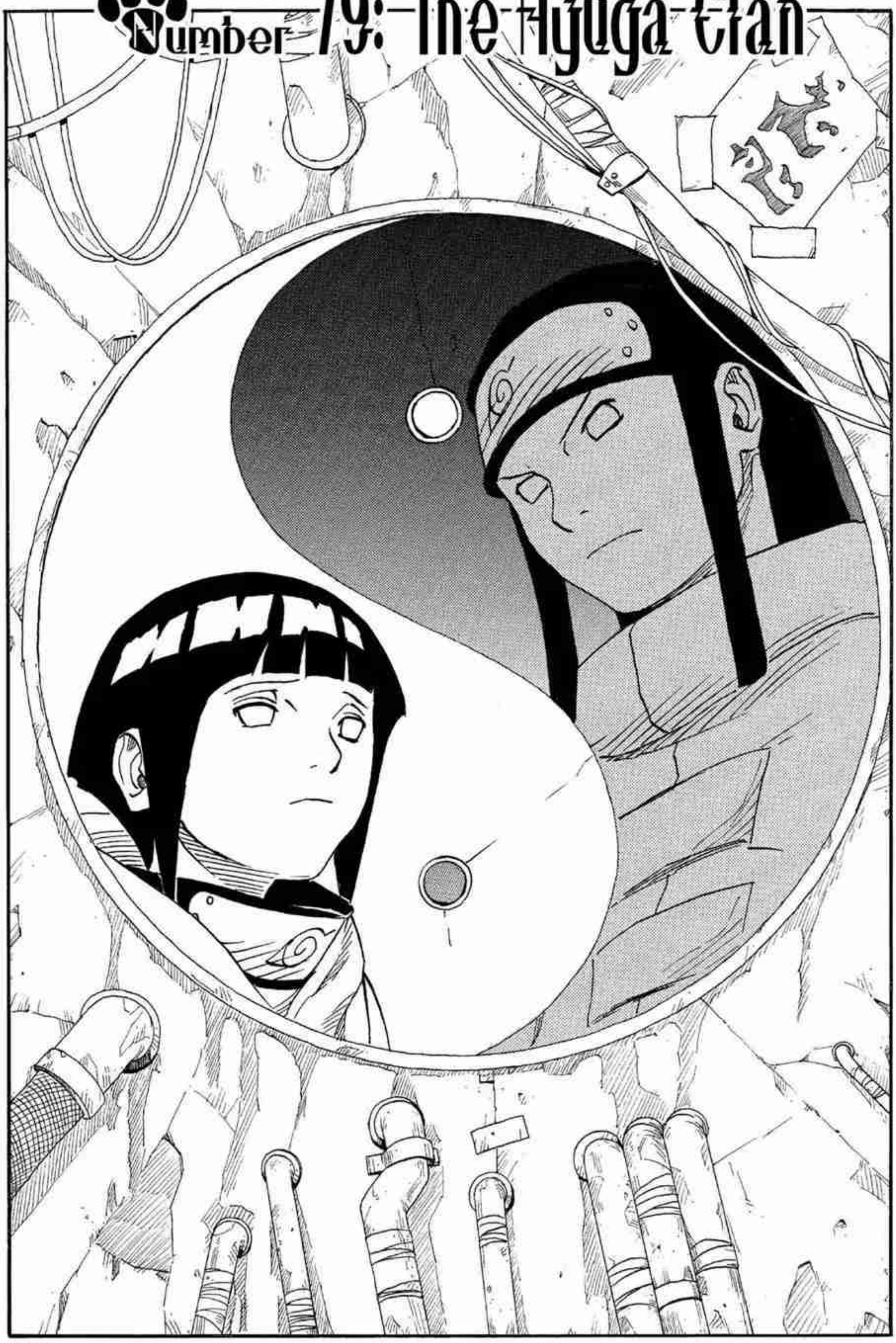
!!

...NARUTO...

...



Number 79: The Hyuga Clan



...NARUTO...

...

...

JUST HEARING HIM HAS MADE ME MAD, AND IT'S YOU WHO HAS TO FIGHT HIM!

COME ON, HINATA. AT LEAST TALK BACK TO HIM!!

HE IS SO ANNOYING ...!

NARUTO...

...

READ THIS WAY

...THANK YOU.

SO YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WITHDRAW...?

THEN I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS HERE.

THE LOOK IN HER EYES IS DIFFERENT NOW...

...

I...

I NEVER GO BACK ON MY WORD.

THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY!

I DON'T QUIT, AND I WON'T RUN!!

POP POP

POP POP

BYAKU

...I DON'T WANT TO RUN ANYMORE!

BYA-KUGAN!!

!

...

!

THAT'S ...!

BIG BROTHER NEJI...

SHFFF

... LET'S FIGHT.

READ THIS WAY

...

POP POP

SKF

OKAY THEN...

THEY HAVE THE SAME HYUGA STYLE, AFTER ALL... EVEN HER STANCE IS IDENTICAL TO NEJI'S.

...HYUGA STYLE?

...THAT "THE STRONGEST JUNIOR NINJA IS A MEMBER OF MY OWN TEAM"!

...I'VE MENTIONED IT BEFORE, I'M SURE...

HUH?!

KRAK

...THE STRONGEST SCHOOL OF TAIJUTSU IN KONOHA!

...TO HYUGA NEJI!

...

PULSE

I WAS REFER-RING...

TAK

THOP

THUP

fwup fwup fwup fwup

READ THIS WAY

ZING

HERE IT IS...!

UNH...

NO... IT'S JUST A SCRATCH!

DID SHE GET HIM?!

!

...AMONG THE HYUGA, THERE ARE UNIQUE TAIJUTSU PASSED DOWN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HUH ?!

THAT'S WHY THE HYUGA CLAN IS OFTEN REGARDED AS KONOHA'S MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FAMILY.

...A SCRATCH IS ALL IT WOULD TAKE.

BUT...

THAT LEADS TO THE BREAKDOWN OF THE INTERNAL ORGANS, DESTROYING THE FOE FROM WITHIN.

...THE HYUGA CLAN EMPLOYS JUKEN, OR "GENTLE FIST," TO INFLICT DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY'S KEIRAKUKEI, THROUGH WHICH THE CHAKRA FLOWS.

UNLIKE THE TAIJUTSU THAT LEE AND I SPECIALIZE IN, WHICH IS ALL ABOUT BEATINGS, BRUISES AND BROKEN BONES -- A STYLE ITS PROPONENTS CALL GOKEN, OR "FEROCIOUS FIST"...

...ANY ENEMY STRUCK WITH THAT BLOW IS GOING TO SUCCUMB!

THERE'S NO WAY OF STRENGTH-ENING THE INTERNAL ORGANS, SO...

...THE EFFECT GROWS GRADUALLY AFTER THE INITIAL ATTACK.

SKF SKF

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH, BUT...

SKFF

TAK!

FWOP

FFFOP

FFFAP

YES, EVEN I CAN...

SMAT

FWUP

FWIP

...HINATA...

HINATA'S PUSHING HIM...!

...

YEAH, HINATA!!

...HERE WE GO AGAIN... THE INSIGHTFUL QUESTIONS OF AN IDIOT!

WHAT'S A KEIRAKUKEI?!

HEY! HEY!

!

...TO ATTACK THE KEIRAKUKEI?!

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE THEY...

IT'S LIKE A SYSTEM OF VESSELS THAT CARRY CHAKRA THROUGHOUT OUR BODIES!!

THE KEIRAKUKEI IS A KIND OF NETWORK OF ENERGY LINES, SPREAD THROUGHOUT OUR BODIES IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS THE HUMAN CIRCULATORY SYSTEM.

ALLOW ME, SAKURA.

ATTACK THE KEIRAKUKEI...

...AND THE ORGANS WILL SUFFER AS WELL!

YES... AND IT'S DELICATELY INTERTWINED WITH THE ORGANS THAT MANIPULATE CHAKRA.

OH... LIKE PASSAGEWAYS FOR CHAKRA, EH?

READ THIS WAY

HM?!

WHOA... I'M BOWLED OVER BY YOUR INTELLECT...

OW!

THOK

BE RESPECTFUL! HE OUTRANKS US!

...AS HIS GREATEST FOE, SO...

IT'S UNDER-STANDABLE... LEE REGARDS NEJI...

...SO HOW DO YOU ATTACK SOMETHING YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE?!

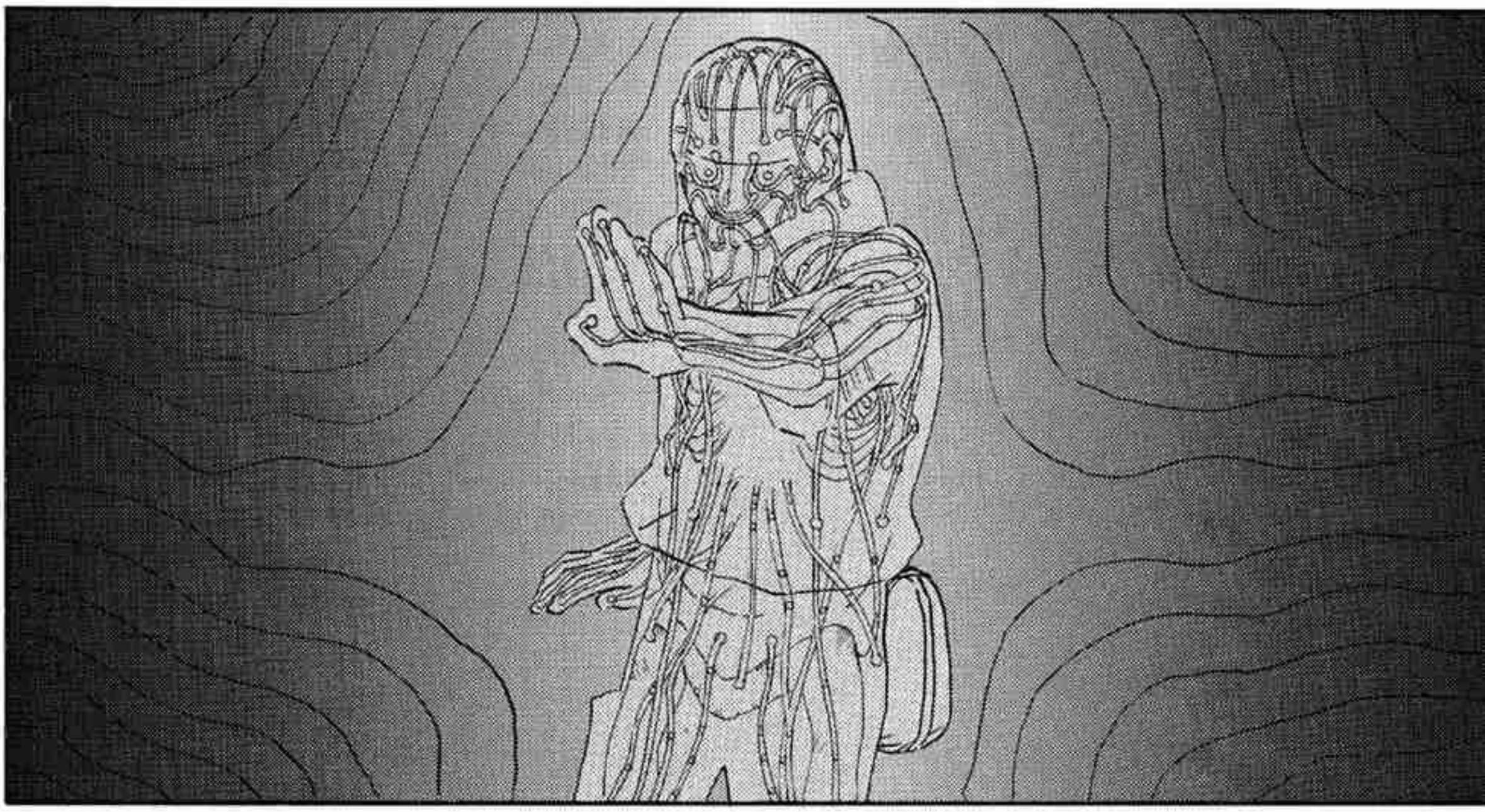
I MEAN, THIS "KEIRAKUKEI" THING IS JUST ENERGY LINES INSIDE THE BODY...

THOK

IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE!

THEY CAN.

HUF
HUF
HUF
THOSE TWO... THEIR BYAKUGAN CAN SEE THEM.



...WHERE IT CAN INFLICT MASSIVE DAMAGE ON THE ENEMY'S KEIRAKUKEI.

YOU TAKE YOUR OWN CHAKRA AND RELEASE IT THROUGH THE ENERGY PORTALS IN YOUR HANDS, FORCING IT INTO THE BODY OF YOUR FOE....

TAK

AND GENTLE FIST ATTACKS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE PURELY BRUTE-FORCE, PHYSICAL KIND...

ALL RIGHT!!

POW

DID SHE GET HIM...?!

...!!

THUD

GA!!
GK

...OF THE MAIN BRANCH'S STRENGTH?

...SO THIS IS THE FULL EXTENT...

!

GRRR

HUF

N... NOT YET...

HUF

HUF

WHAT ABOUT HINATA'S ATTACK?!

HEY! WHAT THE HECK?!

READ THIS WAY

HYAH!

SWIPE

SMAT

!

POKE

愛

MY, MY... IT SEEMS THOSE WHO'VE CALLED HIM THE GREATEST GENIUS IN HYUGA CLAN HISTORY HAVEN'T OVERSTATED THE CASE.

D... DON'T TELL ME...

...WHAT A FIGHTER!

SSSSLIP

CLENCH

!

SSSSSSLIP

YOU MEAN... FROM THE VERY BEGINNING...?

...IT CAN'T BE!

!!

WH-WHAT'S HE SAYING?!

MY EYES CAN DETECT THE TENKETSU!

PRECISELY...

THESE NODES ARE CALLED TENKETSU... AND, IN THEORY, IF YOU CAN ACCURATELY HIT THEM...

...YOU CAN HALT THE FLOW OF AN ENEMY'S CHAKRA, OR ENHANCE IT, CONTROLLING IT IN ANY WAY YOU WISH.

...ALONG THE KEIRAKUKEI THAT WE SPOKE OF EARLIER, THERE ARE 361 CHAKRA POINTS...

...NO LARGER THAN THE PRICK OF A PIN.

AND REGARDLESS OF HAVING ALL-PENETRATING EYES, TO BE ABLE TO -- IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE -- PERCEIVE SO ACCURATELY AND...

...THESE TENKETSU...

...THEY'RE UNDETECT-ABLE, EVEN TO MY SHARINGAN EYE.

BUT WHILE WE'RE ON THE TOPIC, LET ME ADD...

AIEE!

UHAA

LADY HINATA... THIS IS THE UNALTERABLE DIFFERENCE IN STRENGTH...

...THE DISTINCTION THAT SEPARATES THE ELITE FROM THE FAILURE.

SKIDDD

!

!

...

HUF

HUF

HUF

THE ONLY POSSIBLE OUTCOME WAS YOUR PRESENT DESPAIR.

FROM THE MOMENT YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T RUN, YOUR DEFEAT WAS INEVITABLE.

HUF

HUF

HUF

THIS IS THE UNCHANGE-ABLE REALITY.

READ THIS WAY

...I...

...WITHDRAW!

HINATA...

...!

...GO BACK... ON MY WORD...

...N...NEVER...

HUF

HUF

BECAUSE... THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY, TOO...!

THE WORLD OF KISHIMOTO MASASHI
MY PERSONAL HISTORY, PART II

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I WAS SO FIXATED ON THE ALPHA MALE, I HADN'T BEEN LOOKING WHERE I WAS GOING, AND I STEPPED RIGHT ON ONE OF THE YOUNG MONKEYS!
THE POOR LITTLE MONKEY RAN OFF SCREAMING...AND IN ALMOST THE SAME INSTANT, I FELT SOMETHING CLAMP ONTO MY BACK! I LOOKED OVER MY SHOULDER, AND TO MY HORROR, IT WAS THE LITTLE MONKEY'S MOTHER, BARING HER TEETH AND LOOKING DETERMINED TO TAKE A BITE OUT OF ME! ALL I COULD THINK WAS "I'M GOING TO BE EATEN!!" I DESPERATELY TRIED TO SHAKE OFF THAT MOTHER MONKEY AND RUN AWAY, BUT I LOST MY BALANCE AND FELL OVER. AS I SCRAMBLED TO GET BACK UP, I LOOKED UP AND SAW THAT THE ENORMOUS BOSS MONKEY HAD LEAPT FROM HIS BOULDER TO ATTACK ME! IT WAS LIKE HE HAD TRANSFORMED INTO A *DRAGONBALL*-STYLE SAIYAN MONSTER MONKEY, SO I TRULY THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE. I TRIED AGAIN TO STAND AND RUN AWAY... BUT MY KNEES WERE LIKE RUBBER AND I COULD BARELY STAND! I THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE END FOR ME, BUT RIGHT THEN THE MONKEYS' HANDLER TACKLED THE ALPHA MONKEY AND TRAPPED HIM. BEFORE THE RELIEF COULD EVEN FULLY REGISTER IN MY BRAIN, THE HANDLER GLARED AT ME WITH AN EXPRESSION THAT SCARED ME ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE HEAD MONKEY'S HAD AND YELLED, "**RUN**!!"
AS MY SENSES BEGAN TO RETURN TO ME, I LOOKED AROUND AND SAW A RIDICULOUS NUMBER OF MONKEYS CHARGING AT ME! "THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS TAME, FRIENDLY MONKEYS," I THOUGHT, CRYING MY EYES OUT AS I RAN!! AND ON TOP OF ALL THAT, I SAW THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE THING: THE ENTIRE BASEBALL CLUB WAS UNDER ASSAULT BY THE MONKEYS!!
AAAUGH!
IT WAS AN AMAZING SIGHT. THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER, ORDINARY TOURISTS AROUND, AND THEY WERE BEING LEFT ALONE. WHY WERE THE MONKEYS ATTACKING ONLY THE BASEBALL CLUB?! THEN, THE OBVIOUS ANSWER CAME TO ME! WE ALL HAD THE SAME *GORINGARI* BUZZ-CUT HAIR AND WERE WEARING WHITE SHIRTS AND OUR BLACK SCHOOL UNIFORM PANTS. TO THE MONKEYS, WE PROBABLY LOOKED LIKE SOME WEIRD, SHAVED-HEADED, WHITE-AND-BLACK GANG OF INVADERS.
IN ANY CASE, WE LEFT THE MONKEY MOUNTAIN JUST AS FAST AS WE COULD. ONCE WE WERE ALL SAFELY INSIDE THE BUS, EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO CATCH THEIR BREATH AND EXCITEDLY DISCUSSING THE INCIDENT, WONDERING WHY IT HAPPENED. IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT MY HAVING ACCIDENTALLY STEPPED ON THE LITTLE MONKEY WAS A PRETTY JUICY TIDBIT... SO I CONFESSED, EXPECTING THE REST OF THE CLUB TO LAUGH. BUT NO ONE FOUND IT THE LEAST BIT FUNNY.
(THIS IS A TRUE STORY!)

Number 80:

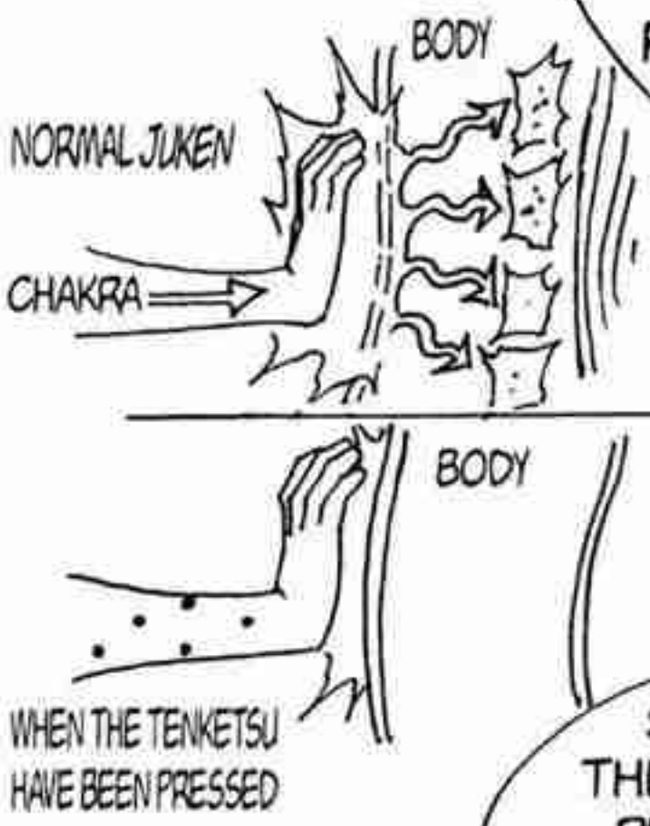
The Outer Limits

HUF
HUF
HUF
KOFF
HUF
HUF
YEAH... I'VE NOTICED THAT SHE'S ALWAYS WATCHING YOU, NARUTO...
HUNH?
SHE'S A LOT LIKE YOU...
...MAN, SHE'S GOT GUTS!
WHOA! HINATA...

READ THIS WAY

HUF
HUF
HUF
BLINK
...
COME HERE...
SPLATTER
THUD!
-;GACK;-
THAT KID IS ALREADY AT HER LIMIT...
ONE MORE ATTACK AND SHE'LL ...!
!!

NEJI'S STRIKES ON HER TENKETSU NODE POINTS HAVE COMPLETELY ARRESTED THE FLOW OF HINATA'S CHAKRA.



SHE'S LOST THE CAPACITY TO PERFORM THE JUKEN (GENTLE FIST) ATTACKS THAT FLOOD HER CHAKRA INTO HER OPPONENT'S BODY.

THIS FIGHT IS AS GOOD AS DONE.

SKF

IT SEEMS INEVITABLE. NEJI WILL WIN.

BUT I DOUBT THAT, AGAINST A FIGHTER LIKE THIS NEJI, EVEN OUR OWN SASUKE WOULD PREVAIL.

READ THIS WAY

SOUKE

HE'S JUST TOO STRONG...

HIS LEVEL OF STRENGTH... IT... IT'S NOT A FAIR FIGHT!

HINATA... SHE WON'T GET KILLED, WILL SHE...?

THOSE EYES... SO CREEPY!

GRRR

HANG IN THERE, HINATA!!

UNH...!

K'OFF

...NARUTO...!!

K'OFF

I'VE BEEN WATCHING...

!

JAK

!

THE LOOK OF STRENGTH IS BACK IN HER EYES...

FWUP

FWUP

FWUP

WHY IS THAT...?

I'VE WATCHED YOU FOR YEARS!!

READ THIS WAY

AND NONE OF YOU ARE GONNA BEAT ME!!

...I FEEL A WELLSPRING OF COURAGE BUBBLING UP INSIDE ME.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, BUT...

...WHEN I WATCH NARUTO...

BUT I CAN DO IT! I'M AWESOME!

THAT'S HOW I START TO FEEL!!

...AM WORTH SOMETHING!

I FEEL LIKE IF I JUST DO MY BEST...

...THEN EVEN I...

!

THWAK

!!

SWIPE

SHFF

!!

AH!

WHAP

UGH!

AK

HUF

GAK

KOFF

KOFF

!

STUMBLE

SHF

YOU TRAINED CONSTANTLY... DESPERATELY...

HEY, HINATA! LET'S HEAD HOME ALREADY!

WHAP

...

HINATA

...

...BUT AT SOME POINT, YOU STARTED TRYING TO CHANGE.

...YOU ALWAYS HAD A HABIT OF QUITTING...

READ THIS WAY

BUT THAT'S NO LONGER TRUE...

THE HINATA I SEE NOW...

YOU FALTERED. YOU WERE WEAK. AND YOU NEVER HAD FAITH IN YOURSELF.

BUT ON MISSIONS, YOU WERE ALWAYS FULL OF MISTAKES.

HUF ...UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN!

HUF

HUF ...HAS A LOOK IN HER EYES...

HUF

...I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR SUCH A LONG TIME... BUT NOW, AT LAST...

...YOU'RE WATCHING ME!

TAK

...NARUTO!

THUD

!!

GAHK

FROM THE START, YOUR ATTACKS HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY INEFFECTIVE!

DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN TO QUIT?

FLOP

SKKF

SLLP

...

PLEASE, HINATA... CALL THIS OFF. YOU HAVE LOST THE MATCH, BUT YOU'VE SUCCEEDED IN CHANGING YOURSELF! YOU DID A GREAT JOB!

SO, OF MY OWN VOLITION, I...

I REALLY... WANTED TO CHANGE THAT ABOUT MYSELF.

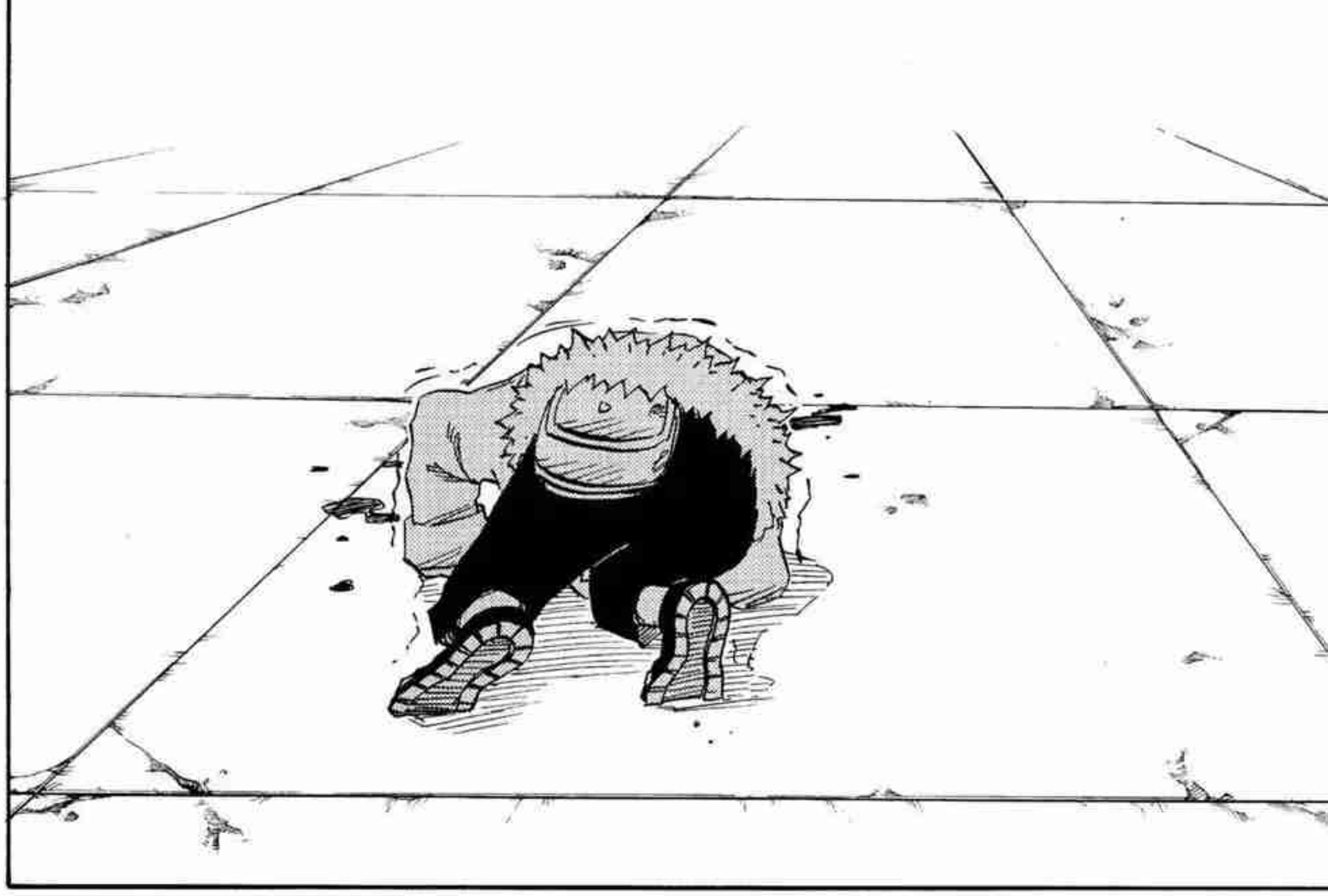
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, YOU IDIOT?! SHE'S GOT NOTHING LEFT! SHE'S ALREADY COLLAPSED!!

DON'T STOP IT!!

SEEING AS THE MATCH CANNOT GO ON, I--

IT'S A PITY, BUT THE GIRL CAN NO LONGER EVEN STAND...

THAT WAS NEJI'S MASTER-STROKE. IT TARGETS THE HEART.



IF YOU PUSH TOO FAR, YOU REALLY WILL DIE...

...WHY ARE YOU GETTING UP?

...IS FINALLY WATCHING ME, AND...

HUF

...IT'S BECAUSE NOW THE PERSON I'VE ADMIRED FOR SO LONG...

WHY...?!

BLINK

HUF

HUF

UGK

HUF

...I CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK UNCOOL!!

...AND IN FRONT OF HIM...

GRR

RR

...

YOU'VE HATED AND PUNISHED YOURSELF FOR YOUR OWN WEAKNESS AND FRAILTY...

BUT YOU CAN'T FIGHT YOUR NATURE... OR CHANGE YOUR FATE.

YOU WERE BURDENED FROM BIRTH WITH THE DESTINY OF THE HYUGA CLAN'S MAIN BRANCH...

TH-THIS ISN'T OVER YET!

I CAN SEE WITH THESE EYES... IT'S TAKING ALL YOUR STRENGTH JUST TO STAND!

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYONE.

READ THIS WAY

I CAN SEE IT NOW... THAT EVEN MORE THAN ME...

BUT... YOU'RE WRONG, COUSIN NEJI...

BE AT PEACE!

BUT YOU NEED NOT SUFFER ANY MORE.

GRRRR

FLINCH

...IT'S YOU WHO ARE TORN AND SUFFERING... CAUGHT BETWEEN THE DESTINIES OF THE MAIN BRANCH AND CADET BRANCH OF OUR CLAN!

TAK

!

!

SHIFT

NEJI... THE MATCH IS ALREADY OVER!!

GR

!!

!!

TAP

WELL... WHY IS IT THAT THE OTHER JÔNIN ARE GETTING INVOLVED? SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR THE MAIN BRANCH, EH...?

ENOUGH, NEJI!!

BEFORE THIS BEGAN, YOU SWORE YOU WOULDN'T DRAG THE ISSUES YOU HAVE WITH YOUR FAMILY'S MAIN BRANCH INTO THIS.

!!

THROB

HINATA!

UNH!

KOFF

GAGH

FLOP

HINATA!! HEY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

BOUNCE

SHE DOESN'T LOOK GOOD. HER FACE IS SO PALE...!

HOP HOP

...N-

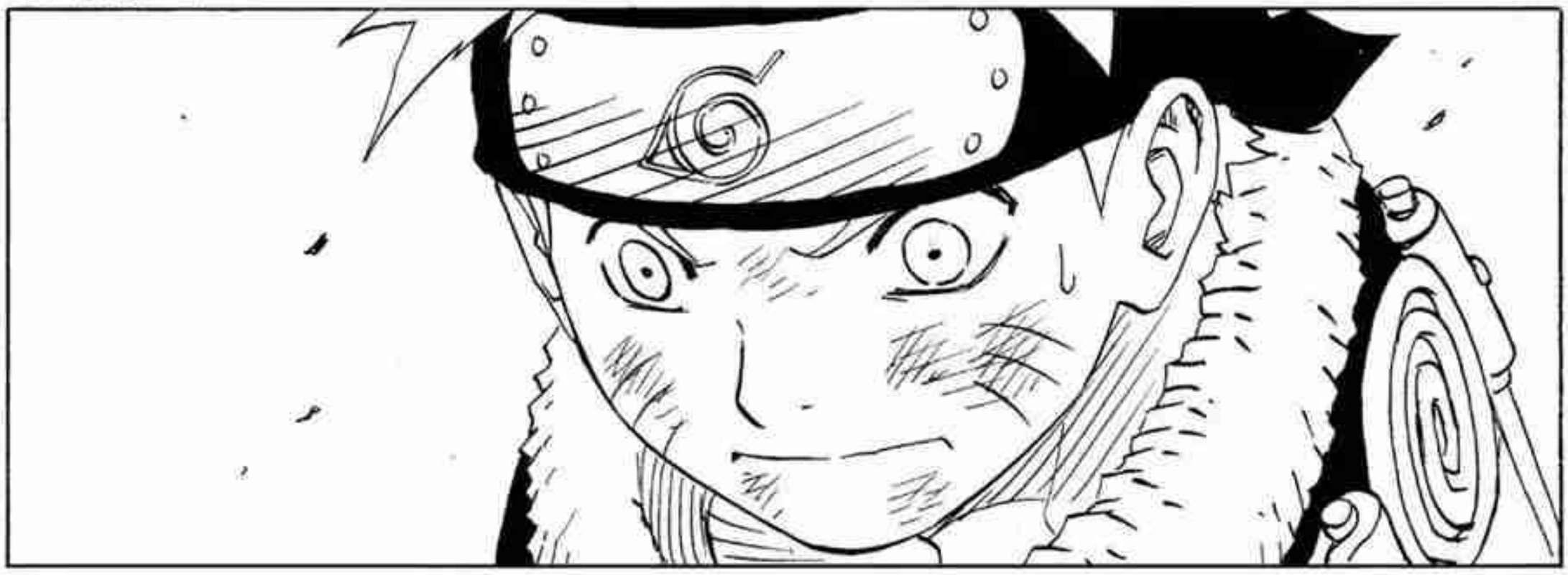
NARUTO

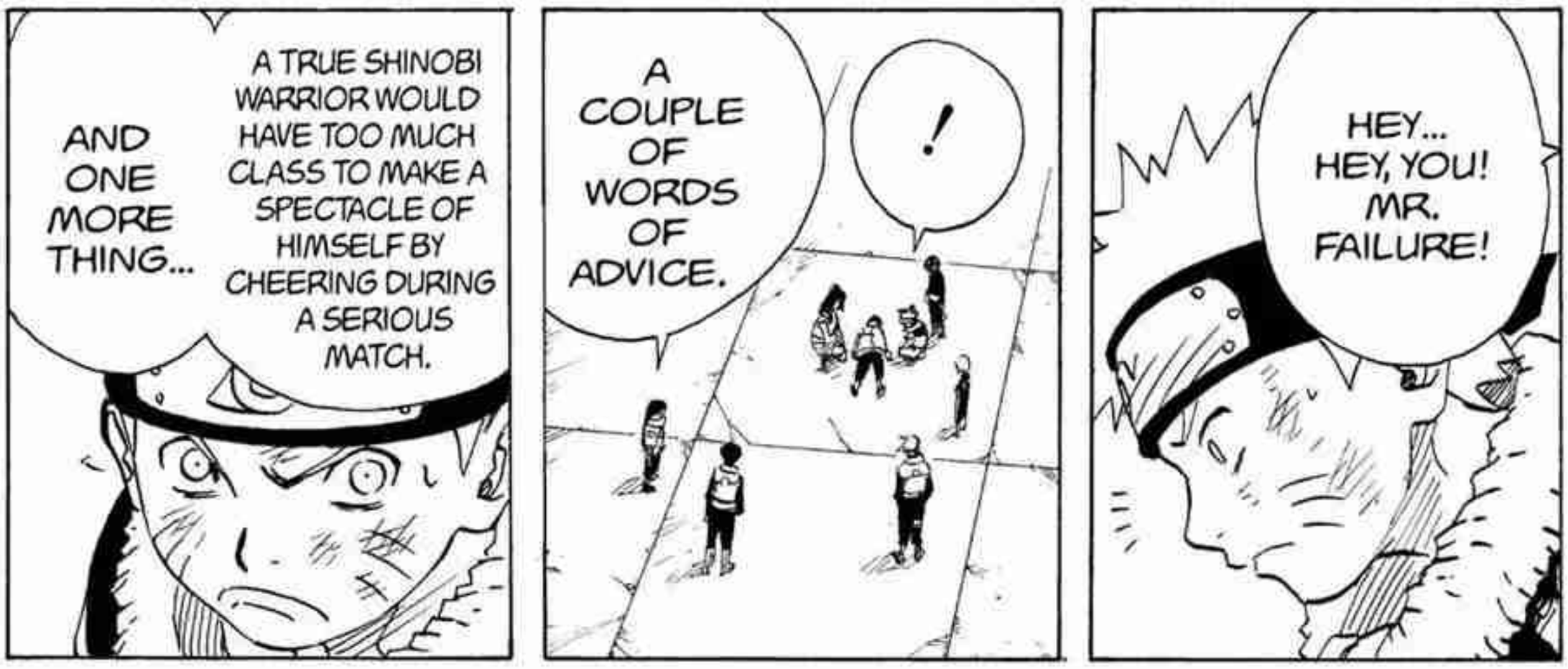
...

...MANAGED TO CHANGE... JUST A LITTLE BIT...

...I... WONDER IF MAYBE I...

READ THIS WAY





Number 81:

Gaara versus...

YOU MAY AS WELL ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE.

ONCE A FAILURE, ALWAYS A FAILURE!

SHF

HEH...

YOU WANNA TRY ME?

TAK

...

OH!

!!

!!!

SKIDD

KRAP

...

...!

!

...

I UNDERSTAND ALMOST PAINFULLY WELL WHAT YOU'RE FEELING, NARUTO! BUT...

...WE HAVE TO LIMIT OUR BATTLES TO THE CONFINES OF THE SCHEDULED FIGHTS.

WHAT...?!

...EVEN THOUGH HIS OPPONENT COULD VERY WELL BE ME!

...IT REALLY MAKES YOU LOOK FORWARD TO THE FINAL ROUNDS, EH...?

THE PROSPECT OF SEEING A FAILURE DEFEAT A GENIUS THROUGH SHEER FORCE OF WILL...

YEAH.

...

I GET IT, OKAY?!

...I'LL HAVE NO REGRETS!

BUT EVEN IF IT'S YOU IN THE FINALS, NARUTO...

...

READ THIS WAY

GAGK

SHIVER

FWIP

FWIP

LEE, YOU AMAZING KID! NICE!

!

OH NO... SHE'S GOING INTO VENTRICULAR FIBRILLATION...

!!

PAT

S-SORRY ...!

WHERE ARE THOSE MEDICS? HURRY!!

TAK TAK

HE REALLY INTENDED TO KILL HER...

...YOU'D BETTER TAKE CARE OF HER.

INSTEAD OF WASTING TIME SCOWLING AT ME...

TAK

AT THIS RATE, SHE WON'T LAST 10 MINUTES!

WE'VE GOT TO GET HER TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM RIGHT NOW!

...!

SKF

MOVE IT!!

READ THIS WAY

HYAH!

CHIPE

BECAUSE... THAT'S... MY SHINOBI WAY, TOO...!

HUF

HUF

HUF

...HINATA...

CLENCH

I GIVE YOU MY WORD...

SPLIT

...!

SHUP

!

SHF

!

...TO WIN!!

I VOW...

HE HAS NO IDEA HOW OUTRANKED HE IS!

...THAT KID SO DOESN'T KNOW HIS PLACE, IT'S FUNNY...

...NARUTO!

NARUTO...

HMPH...

READ THIS WAY

SQUIRM

...BUT OURS HAS AN... INNER NATURE THAT'S UNIQUELY BAD.

...NOW WE KNOW THERE ARE TWO MONSTERS HERE...

...THE DEMON THAT LIVES...

...WITHIN HIM!!

THIS ISN'T GOOD... GAARA'S SMELLED BLOOD...AND NOW THAT THING IS WAKING UP... STARTING TO FIDGET...

TAK

TAK

WE'VE GOT TO START PLANNING AHEAD... TO PREPARE FOR THE FINAL ROUNDS...

YOU'D THINK HE HADN'T EVEN BEEN HARMED... THAT HE STILL HAS HIDDEN RESERVES OF STRENGTH...

BUT THAT NEJI GUY...

!

HEY...!

TAK

TAK

NARUTO'S AN IDIOT... BUT HE'D BE A GOOD PLACE TO START.

MAYBE I SHOULD GATHER SOME INTELLIGENCE...

GRR

GRR

YOU ARE SO DEAD THE FIRST TIME I GET AN EXCUSE!

WHAT THE HECK DO YOU WANT?!

THAT MISERABLE LITTLE...

TAK

I LIKE THAT.

YOU'RE A FUNNY GUY...

AND I DON'T LIKE THAT!

WELL YOU'RE NOT FUNNY AT ALL...

READ THIS WAY

I'M GONNA GET THAT GUY!!

...FINE, FINE, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I ASKED.

...

IT'S ABOUT THAT HYUGA NEJI GUY... BUT...

WELL... YOU SEE...

!

IT'S TIME FOR THE NEXT BOUT!!

KOFF KOFF

NOW, THEN...

NO WAY!

SHRUG

GO, LEE!

I GUESS IT'S FINALLY YOUR TURN!

...

I'VE WAITED THIS LONG... IF IT WERE UP TO ME...

SCOWL

!

...IT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE LEE IS... SULKING!

...I'D RATHER BE THE FINAL ACT!!

!

ONLY THE STRONGEST ARE LEFT... WHAT'LL YOU DO?

HEY, CHOJI, YOU'RE IN TROUBLE NOW...

READ THIS WAY

WELL, YOU'LL BE GIVING UP YOUR CHANCE FOR AN ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT VICTORY BARBECUE ONCE THE EXAM IS OVER..

I'LL JUST WITHDRAW RIGHT AWAY... SO IT WON'T MATTER!!

HE'S THE MOST DANGEROUS TYPE!

ESPECIALLY THAT KID FROM SAND... THE LOOK IN HIS EYES WORRIES ME.

DON'T WORRY. IF IT GETS BAD, I'LL JUMP IN AND STOP THE FIGHT. JUST LIKE WITH HINATA! OKAY?!

B...BUT...

HEY, DON'T BAIT HIM WITH FOOD...!

OH YEAH! ALL THE MEAT I CAN EAT!!

LET'S GO! THINK OF THE BARBECUE!!

...UNLESS YOU GET EATEN FIRST, YOU POOR SAP!!

...WILL HE? WHEN HINATA GOT INTO TROUBLE, HE WAS THE ONLY TEACHER FROM KONOHA...

...WHO DIDN'T JUMP IN TO STOP IT! I HOPE CHOJI WILL BE ALL RIGHT...

YOU HEAR THAT, CHOJI? YOU CAN GO FOR IT. MASTER ASUMA WILL BE LOOKING OUT FOR YOU!

愛

LUB DUB

愛

GULP

NOW...

愛

SHP

愛

...

FFWM

WHOOP

愛

SK

DON'T KEEP ME WAITING.

ROARR!

ROAARR!

!

!

!

!

!

!

I'M SAFE!!

...

!

ROARR!

ON GOING

GAARA VS ROCK LEE

I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...

BUT... THAT HUGE GOURD OF GAARA'S... WHAT'S IT FOR?!

SO IT'S LEE ...

READ THIS WAY

THEN... WHO'S THE ONE WHO GOT CAUGHT?!

I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BE THE FINAL ACT ANYWAY!

FWUP

OKAY! YOU CAUGHT ME!!

AS SOON AS I SAID I WANTED TO BE LAST... I WAS THWARTED!

IT'S A NATURAL LAW... YOU CAN THROW A STONE AT A TELEPHONE POLE TIME AND AGAIN AND NEVER HIT IT...

...BUT THE MINUTE YOU AIM TO MISS, YOU END UP HITTING THE THING DEAD CENTER.

YES, SIR!

SNAP

LEE! I'VE NOTICED SOMETHING CRUCIAL THAT MOST PEOPLE MAY HAVE OVER LOOKED.

I HOPE LEE WILL BE ALL RIGHT...

...I SEE...

STOP TAKING NOTES! YOU WON'T HAVE THE TIME TO CONSULT THEM IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE!

I SEE...

SCRITCH SCRITCH

THAT GOURD THING OF HIS IS QUITE SUSPICIOUS...

HOP

YES, SIR!

ALL RIGHT! GO GET HIM, LEE!!

SHHK

TA-K

FACING YOU SO SOON...

...MAKES ME VERY HAPPY!

READ THIS WAY

愛

HMPH!

TO BE CONTINUED IN NARUTO VOL. 10!